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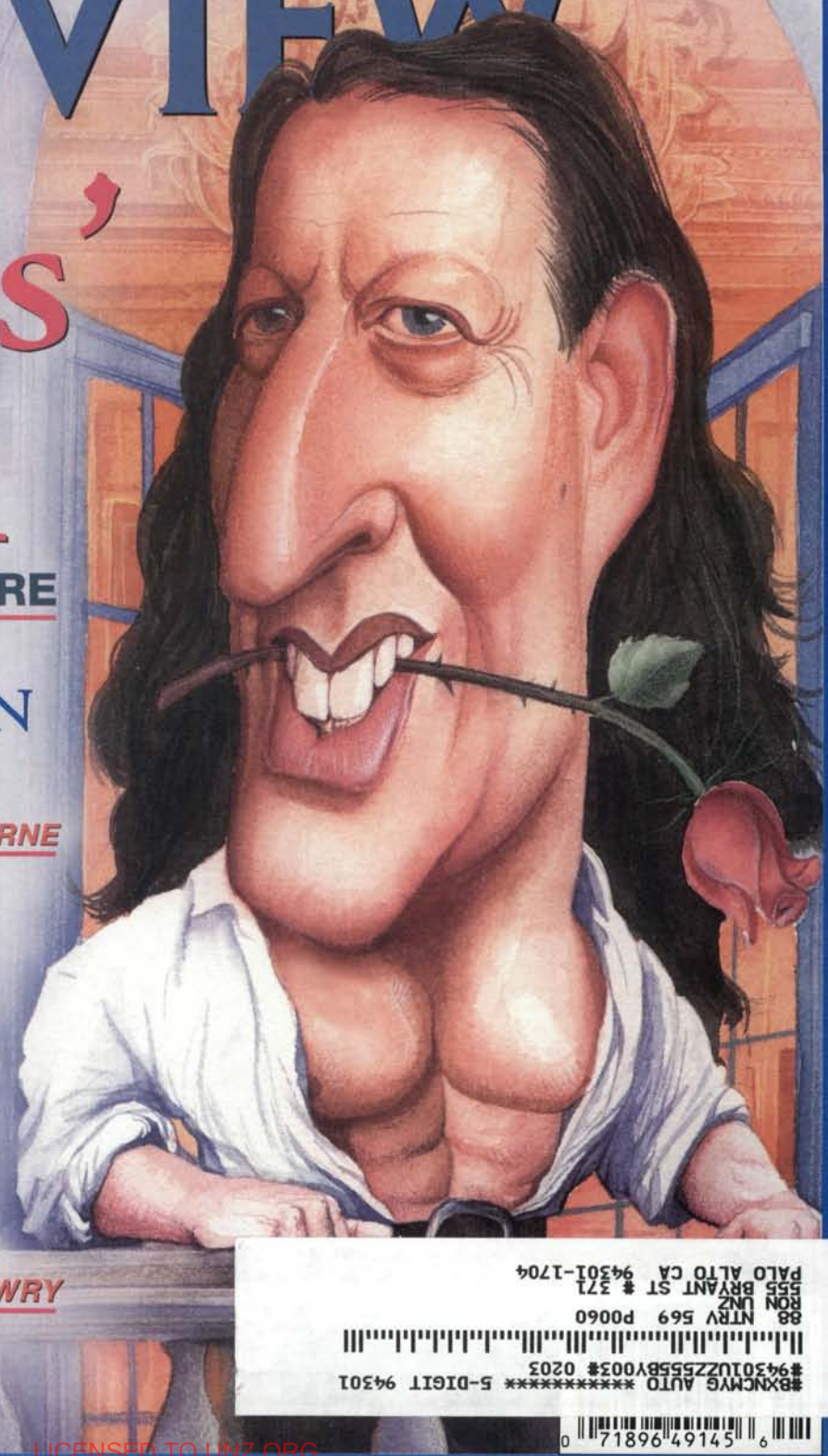

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■ LETTERS ■

THE PARTY OF LINCOLN

Charles R. Kesler makes many excellent observations in his article, "The Republican Challenge" (Sept. 11) about Abraham Lincoln's relevance to the Republican party. Kesler rightly emphasizes the importance of leadership when he writes about "a politics of statesmanship, of persuading the people to do the right thing."

However, left out of Kesler's political calculus is the effect of invoking Lincoln before an audience who hates him. How are we to unite Republicans, conservatives, and the country in the name of Lincoln, when many white Southern intellectuals and academics believe he was, in the words of the beloved M. E. Bradford quoted by Forrest McDonald in NR last February, "dishonest," a duplicitous "pseudo-Puritan," and the "American Caesar of his age"?

Amherst professor Hadley Arkes wrote in NR in 1994 that his students identify more with Stephen A. Douglas than Lincoln. And, more recently, *Ebony* magazine, fairly moderate and mainstream in the black community, prominently advertises a book that disparages Lincoln. Kesler has my vote, but who else's?

Richard K. Mason
Altadena, Calif.

SAME OLD ARAFAT

While wishful thinking about the future of Middle East peace negotiations and final possible agreement may include a picture of Yasser Arafat as a trustworthy partner ("Arafat's Moment of Truth" by David Pryce-Jones, Aug. 28), it falls short of any transformation of Arafat from terrorist to statesman. Having found that an unyielding position combined with the renewal of terrorism leads to unprecedented and dangerous concessions from a series of Israeli governments, Arafat is unlikely to change his spots and consider any agreement short of complete political and territorial surrender.

To his own constituency, Arafat continues to present a picture of the disappearance of Israel the return of all actual or purported Arab refugees to the area. Any temporary peace agreement with Yasser Arafat would be a farce guaranteed by an unrepentant terrorist, incapable of change. The only difference now is that Arafat has replaced terror temporarily with negotiations, until the time is ripe for further unilateral concessions by Israel that threaten its very existence.

Nelson Marans
Silver Spring, Md.

AN NR ORIGINAL

I just read Florence King's latest masterpiece (mistresspiece?) in NR ("The Misanthrope's Corner," Sept. 11). She is an absolute treasure and, in a most complimentary sense, a "great old broad." I laughed out loud (at work) over her descriptions of using Preparation H on her eye and of the Jewish Southern belle. Please don't *ever* let her leave or retire.

Jim Williams
San Antonio, Tex.

UNWELCOME GUESTS

What a relief it will be when I can leave copies of your wonderful magazine on table tops around our house again. As it is now, your covers are being overrun by pictures of people I would never invite into my home and whom I choose not even to look at. Alas, NR has been relegated to the bottom of the stacks, out of sight. The stark reality of the raw photos of those taking America to the cleaners is too much for me to bear. I much preferred the covers with the unflattering caricatures of our ideological opponents. While they were still the same unsavory people, at least their depiction was tempered with humor.

D. J. Byrd
Palm Springs, Calif.

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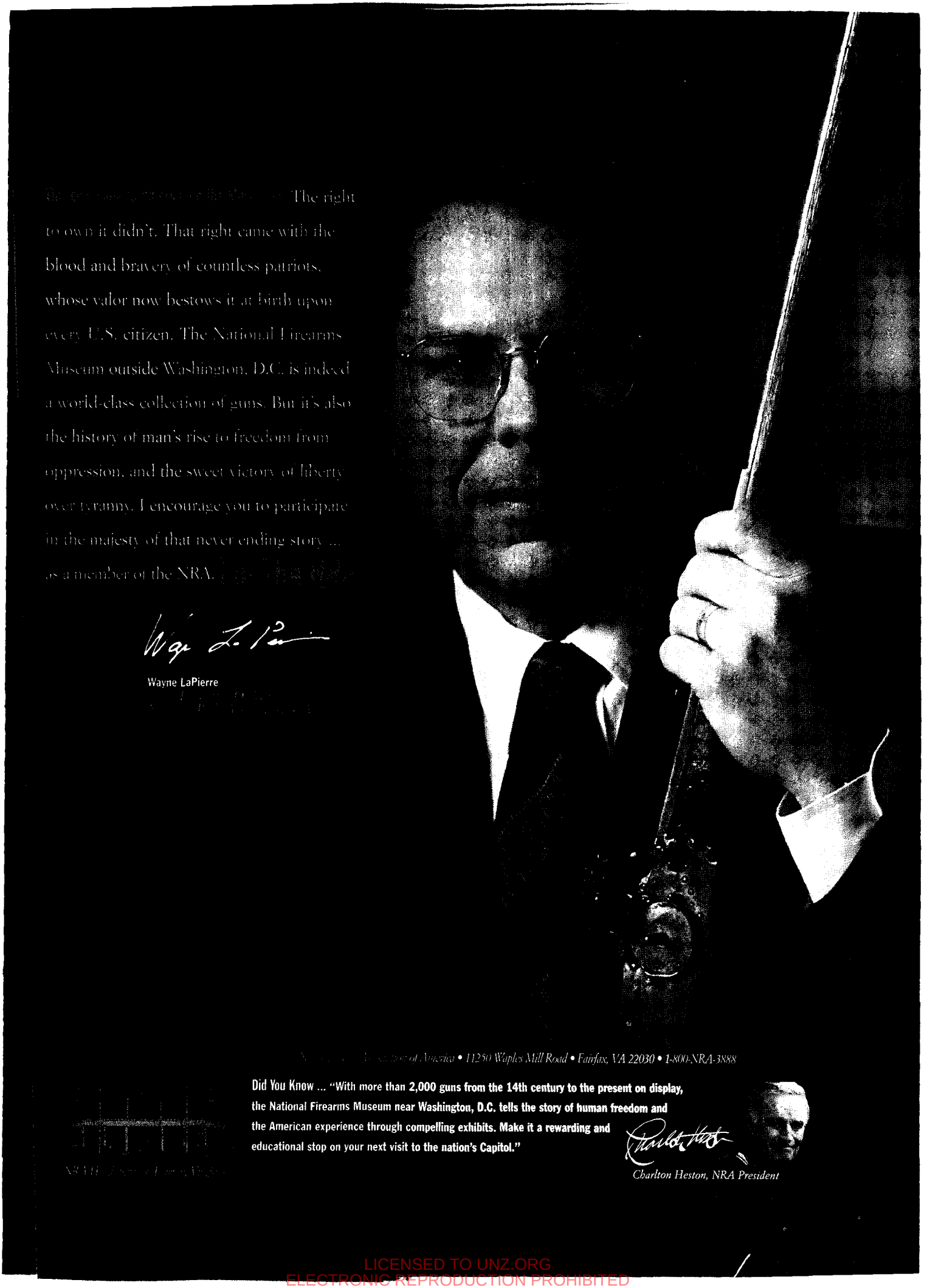

The right to own it didn't. That right came with the blood and bravery of countless patriots, whose valor now bestows it at birth upon every U.S. citizen. The National Firearms Museum outside Washington, D.C. is indeed a world-class collection of guns. But it's also the history of man's rise to freedom from oppression, and the sweet victory of liberty over tyranny. I encourage you to participate in the majesty of that never ending story ... as a member of the NRA.

Wayne LaPierre

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Charlton Heston, NRA President

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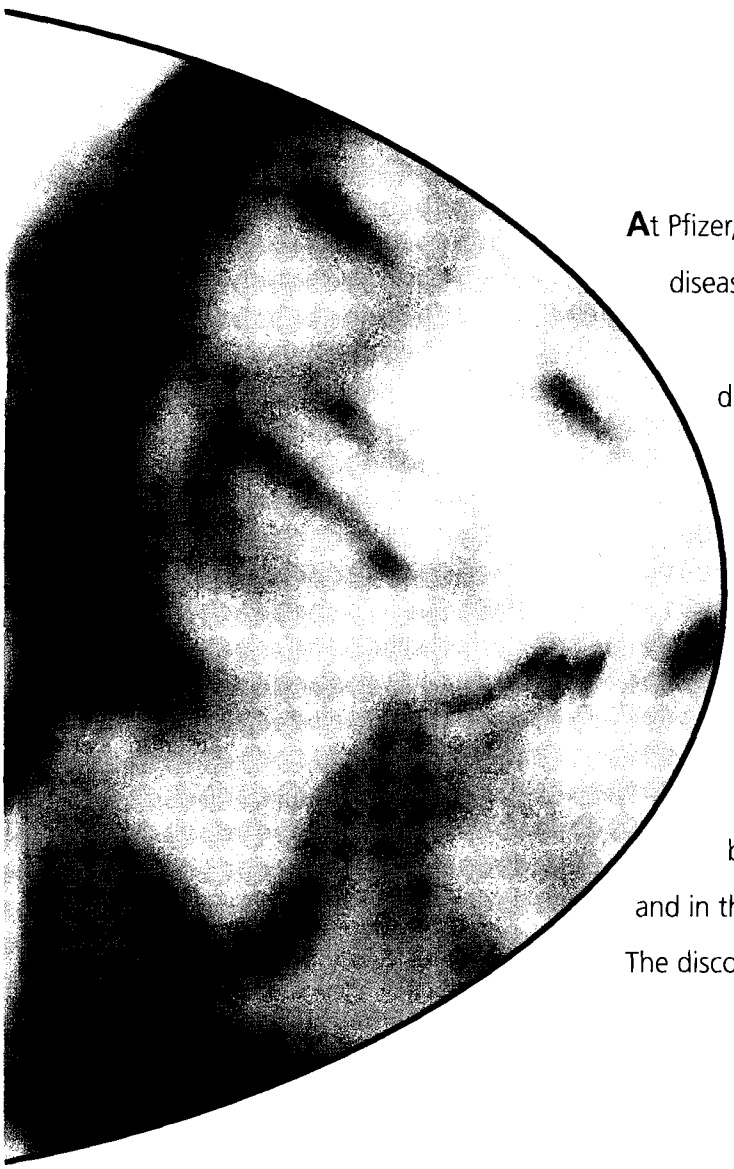

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■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ *The Hotline*'s electoral scoreboard of recent state-by-state polling shows dead heat: Vice President **Gore** leads in 18 states worth 242 electoral voters, and **George W. Bush** is ahead in 28 states worth same (270 needed to win). . . . **Bill Bennett**, on what Republicans think of Bush campaign, in *New York Times*: "There's no doubt about it: There's real worry about the general state of things." . . . *New York Times* reporter **Adam Clymer** admits responsibility for editorial blunder last year in article noting large number of policy experts giving Bush advice and adding, "There may never have been a serious candidate who needed it more." . . . Bush boosts campaigning from five days per week to six. . . . **Dick Cheney**, at Economic Club of Grand Rapids (Mich.): "In my view Al Gore is not yet ready for the big chair."

■ Gore, on **Clinton** administration appointments, at Howard University: "Fifty-three judges and not a **Clarence Thomas** among them." . . . In reference to discrimination lawsuit filed by three black Secret Service agents, Rep. **Cynthia McKinney** (D., Ga.) says vice president's "Negro tolerance level has never been too high," adds, "I've never known him to have more than one black person around him at any given time." Later, she retracts statement. . . . Gore campaign apologizes to wheelchair-bound reporter denied access to Michigan event. . . . "The left has become heavily concentrated on identity politics—gender, race and homophobia," says **Ralph Nader** in *Washington Post*. "It's devolved itself into grievances. Slights are magnified, and they tend to implode on themselves. It's a real dilemma." . . . **Ted Turner** funds pro-abortion groups to make 2.1 million phone-bank calls to women in swing states. . . . Priests for Life spends $250,000 on cable-TV ads.

■ U.S. Open tennis champ **Venus Williams**, taking congratulatory phone call from President Clinton: "Do you think that you could lower my taxes, please, Mr. President?" . . . President Clinton, on **Hillary**'s Senate race: "Everybody that always hated me all those years and were so mean to me, they've all transferred all their anger to her now. It's almost as if they've got one last chance to beat me." . . . He's finally going: Clinton plans to visit Vietnam in November. . . . Clinton, in *Washington Post*: "I think that this whole Whitewater business will be looked upon by any rational observer in history as an absurd episode in American history which didn't amount to a hill of beans. . . . And that the coverage of it as if it were serious required people essentially to suspend all ordinary notions of proof and common sense . . . And now we know, after all this time, that Whitewater thing was a total sham." . . . Clinton's disbarment case in Arkansas probably won't be heard before he leaves

"You'll grant me three wishes? You're not Al Gore, *are you?*

office, says office of Judge **Leon Johnson**. . . . More Clinton, on Hillary: "When we first met and fell in love, I actually felt guilty about it because I thought I was robbing her of the career that I thought she should have." . . . Clinton dispatched lawyer **David Kendall** to inform Hillary that he had lied about **Monica Lewinsky** affair, writes *Washington Post* reporter **Peter Baker** in *The Breach*, his impeachment chronicle.

■ Party-switching Rep. **Michael Forbes** (D., N.Y.) loses primary to **Regina Seltzer**, who will face GOPer **Felix Grucci** for Long Island seat. . . . Retiring Rep. **Herbert Bateman** (R., Va.) dies. . . . Sen. **Robert Torricelli** (D., N.J.), in *USA Today*: "There is an increasing chance that there could be a Democratic majority" in the Senate next year. . . . Sen. **John McCain** (R., Ariz.) won Michigan primary last February, but new poll shows his supporters in state favor Gore over Bush, 57 percent to 30 percent. . . . *Boston Herald* poll shows former Rep. **Joe Kennedy** (D.) running way ahead of potential opponents in 2002 Massachusetts governor election. . . . Sister **Catherine Moran** of New Jersey becomes first Roman Catholic nun to serve as guest chaplain in House. . . . As ACLU criticizes Louisiana governor **Mike Foster** (R.) for requesting a "week of prayer" to end drought, Foster offers no apologies and tells *Baton Rouge Advocate*, "It rained today, didn't it?"

■ To offset population losses, Iowa governor **Tom Vilsack** (D.) wants state exempted from federal immigration quotas. . . . FDA panel votes 7–6 not to lift ban on blood donations by gays. . . . This spring, homeschooled children scored 81 points higher than national average on SAT, and nearly 2 points higher on ACT, reports *Time*. . . . Advisory Council on Historic Preservation says World War II memorial "has serious and unresolved adverse effects on the preeminent historic character of the National Mall." . . . House Resources Committee approves bill for **Reagan** memorial on Mall. . . . National Journalism Center offers media internships, with Dec. 5 application deadline. For details, visit www.eri-njc.org.

■ **Fidel Castro**, speaking in New York City before crowd that included Rep. **Jose Serrano** (D., N.Y.) and Rep. **Maxine Waters** (D., Calif.): "I came to Harlem because I knew it was here that I would find my best friends." . . . Russian president **Vladimir Putin** proposes banning weapons in space. . . . Macedonian honey producers demand compensation from NATO for last year's bombing in Yugoslavia, say military action made bees "very nervous" and reduced their productivity.

■ Last words of murderer **George Harris**, executed in Missouri on Sept. 13, according to *Washington Times*: "Someone needs to kill my trial attorney." **NR**

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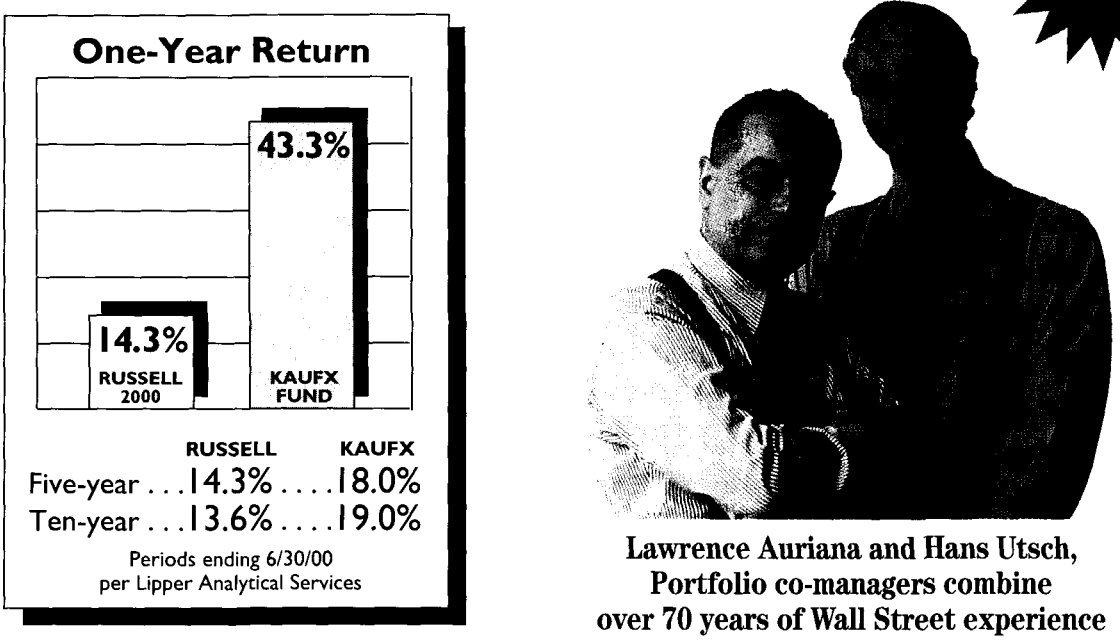

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THE WEEK

■ Alec Baldwin has said that he will leave the United States if George W. Bush wins the election. Look for a surge of single-issue voting in the Hamptons.

■ The RATS story—the flap over the split-second flash of four letters during a Republican campaign commercial—was a piece of silly-season filler, more appropriate to mid July than September. The Democrats, echoed by the *New York Times*, charged that it was subliminal advertising, a new low in campaign technique. But since admen know that subliminal advertising does not work, why would the GOP try it? The fleeting word is actually CRATS—the spot knocks bureaucrats. The story was broken by Fox in late August; only when the Gore campaign pushed it on the *Times*, which put it on the front page, did it gain national traction. The Bush campaign rightly feels aggrieved. But it might reflect that these stormlets blow up most easily in vacuums. If they had pulled out of their post-convention doldrums—if they had all along had an agenda more compelling than compassionate conservatism—we might all have been discussing that, rather than unpleasant rodents.

■ But perhaps those doldrums are now ending. Finally, George W. Bush has started to make the case against Al Gore's policies. On taxes, on prescription drugs for seniors, on Social Security—he's arguing—Gore wants to keep power in Washington: "The vice president talks about 'the people versus the powerful.' But in all his plans, who ends up with the power? Who always ends up making the choices? Not taxpayers, but tax collectors. Not senior citizens, but HMO overseers. Not parents, or even teachers, but some distant central office. He says he wants to help 'the people.' If only he would trust them." It is a line of attack that ties Gore to the past, reminds voters of his arrogance, and presents Bush as a problem-solver. So it's a good opening for the next phase of the campaign. Now Bush ought to broaden his criticism. Gore's anticorporate rhetoric is increasingly disconnected from reality (he is accusing "powerful interests" of "targeting the American people"), and he ought to be called on it. Bush should be pointing out that Gore's policies—new energy taxes, Internet taxes, the Microsoft lawsuit, his drug plan—threaten the interests of middle-class shareholders. Just as important, he needs to fight for those interests, explaining how his own policies would prolong the economic expansion and tangibly benefit middle-class voters. And then he needs to stick to it. Bush can still win this race.

■ Patrick Buchanan, the presidential candidate of part of the Reform party, will be spending $12.6 million in taxpayer funds in the election. Much of the money will buy ads on Christian radio stations, trying to get moral conservatives to leave Gov. Bush for him. It is just possible that Buchanan will thereby throw the election to Al Gore—which means he poses a threat that Bush cannot ignore. Bush should respond by making the case for free trade as against the protectionism espoused by both Buchanan and, to a much lesser extent, Gore. At the same time, he should remind moral conservatives why they should vote for him. All of which would help Bush against Gore as well as Buchanan.

■ The first rule of Clinton scandals is not that all the allegations against the First Couple are true, but that all of them are plausible. The second is that the Clintons generally cover their tracks pretty well. After six years and $52 million, that's basically what the independent counsel has concluded about the Whitewater case, in which the Clintons were accused of attempting to defraud taxpayers and then lying about it. "This office determined that the evidence was insufficient to prove to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that either President Clinton or Mrs. Clinton knowingly participated in any criminal conduct," said Robert Ray, Kenneth Starr's successor as independent counsel. The investigation was not, as Democrats would have it, a partisan waste of time: It secured several convictions, including that of Clinton's successor as governor of Arkansas, Jim Guy Tucker. In retrospect, however, the case demonstrates the unwisdom of the independent-counsel law (now thankfully expired). It would have been better for Congress to have held hearings as soon as the allegations were made, in order to get as much information as possible to the public, quickly. But the independent counsel had to focus on painstakingly proving a case, not ensuring political accountability. And while that investigation went on, congressional investigators were hamstrung. Now that Ray has announced his finding, perhaps an attenuated form of political accountability can finally take place—at least if New York voters are paying attention.

■ In "The Accidental Candidate," an article for *Vanity Fair*, Gail Sheehy charges that Gov. Bush probably suffers from dyslexia and is seeking the White House to redeem a life of failures. Her evidence for the first charge? In a high-school essay, Bush thought "lacerates" meant "tears"; his mother drilled him with flash cards to help him with reading; Winston Churchill, a hero of Bush's, was dyslexic; Bush is strongly committed to student achievement; and his stump speech supposedly hasn't changed in seven years ("I will restore honesty and dignity to Austin"?). Perhaps it is a blessing that Sheehy does not even attempt to support her assertion that Bush's "booz-

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perity of College Graduates

Americans have done well in the past decade, but college graduates have really cleaned up. Between 1990 and 1998 (the last year reported by the government), BA holders' earnings rose by 18 percent after adjustment for inflation. People with graduate degrees did even better: 25 percent higher earnings over the eight years, after inflation. High school graduates without college, at the same time, saw earnings increases of only 11 percent after inflation. The financial payoff to a college education and to graduate training rose to an all-time high. The benefits go to those who actually finish college and receive a BA—there has been no sharing of the bonanza by those who receive two-year AA degrees or drop out of BA programs. Because college graduates were already at the top of the earnings distribution, the widening of the education gap contributed to the general rise in economic inequality noted during the decade.

What do college graduates do that puts them on the earnings escalator? The industries that hire large fractions of college graduates are technology users. They include business and engineering services, financial institutions, and the chemical industry. All these industries have workforces that are at least 25 percent college graduates. The most college-intensive industry is securities trading, where 58 percent of all workers have graduated from college.

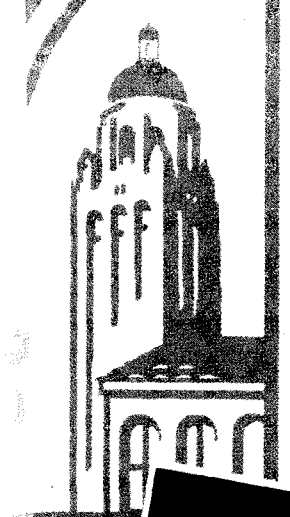
Industries where college graduates have little role are decidedly low tech: restaurants, hotels, mining, and basic manufacturing, including paper, steel, lumber, and food. College graduates are 7 to 15 percent of the workforces of these industries.

The 1990s were the decade when the stock market rewarded technology. Although the most famous examples of big increases in technology stock prices were for technology producers—Cisco, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems—there were also huge increases in the value of technology-using firms. **There is a striking relationship between college intensity and stock market return in the 1990s.** Low-tech firms—those with less than 15 percent college graduates in their workforces—averaged annual returns of 16 percent over the decade, not far above historical averages for the market. High-tech firms with 25 percent or more college graduates averaged a stellar 25 percent per year. A dollar invested in 1990 in low-tech industries, defined in this way, became $4.40 this year, while a dollar invested in high-tech, college-intensive industries became $9.30, more than twice as much.

Technology-using industries have been good to their workers—mostly college graduates—and good to their shareholders. Along with the technology-producing electronics and software industries, they were dynamos of the economy.

It is unlikely that investors will earn such high returns in the coming decade. The fabulous bull market for technology makers and users has already cooled off, especially for Internet companies. But the message is durable that college matters. College graduates are the architects of the new economy, and they have been amply rewarded for that role.

— Robert E. Hall



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ing to blot out his failures" broke his father's heart. Sheehy's article fails to show that politics is not Bush's métier. But it certainly adds to the evidence that journalism is not hers.

■ The case against Wen Ho Lee ended as it began, in a haze of incompetence. The prosecution couldn't overcome, among other things, the fact that its chief witness, an FBI agent, testified falsely under oath. When it seemed an understandably hostile federal judge might turn reams of sensitive government documents over to Lee's defense, the prosecution folded, dropping 58 charges in exchange for a guilty plea to a felony charge of mishandling nuclear secrets. This turn of events has made Lee that most valued of commodities: an ethnic victim. Even President Clinton had to decry his treatment at the hands of the Justice Department (funny—last time we checked, Clinton was head of the executive branch). And it is true that Lee was mistreated. When the *New York Times* ran a high-profile story on the case, Energy secretary Bill Richardson, who had delayed action for months, sacked Lee publicly—something, by the way, that Republican Chris Cox criticized at the time. The whole weight of the China spy scandal was put on Lee's shoulders. Rotten stuff. But it wasn't Lee's ethnicity that first brought him to the attention of investigators; it was the fact that he had contacts with Chinese scientists about which he was less than forthcoming. Then, his extraordinary downloading of the complete codes of the most modern U.S. nuclear weapons—the press is mistaken in denying that the information would be extremely helpful to foreign nuclear programs—came to light. Whether or not Lee passed on any of this information, the recklessness with which he handled it was criminal. Literally. That's why the Left's new favorite ethnic victim is a confessed felon.

■ Eyes meet across a crowded room and two hearts beat as one. Oh, that impulsive president of ours! "It just happened," Clinton explained by way of defending himself. "There were a whole lot of people in the room. I was talking to them and I turned around and he was standing there. . . . The encounter lasted just a few seconds." No cause for alarm; it was only Fidel Castro, and the "encounter" a brief smile and a handshake. In fact, the president at first denied the incident had even occurred; then too many eyewitness accounts surfaced, forcing this grudging confession. We understand, Bill. In an election season, displays of extramarital affection must not be too flagrant. Only four months to go.

■ No one confused Rep. Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton with Daniel Webster and Margaret Thatcher, but both candidates did a decent job in their first debate of the New York Senate race, with Lazio having the edge. But look at the spin afterwards: Lazio, the media told us, was bullying and aggressive; columnist Maureen Dowd compared him to Ricky Ricardo blustering at the hapless Lucy. Lazio pulled a common campaign stunt, marching over to Mrs. Clinton's lectern and asking her to sign a pledge to forswear soft money; such gestures are intellectually vacuous, but they are par for the course these days, and certainly convey no disrespect. What we have here is a feminist bait-and-switch. I am woman, hear me roar, say the ladies—until they encounter some typical rough-and-tumble, and then their underlips go all pouty. Message to Mrs. Clinton, and all female politicians: If you can't stand the heat, stay in the kitchen.

■ When the White House released a picture of Rick Lazio shaking Yasser Arafat's hand during a 1998 junket to the Middle East, Hillary Clinton was asked if it was all a coincidence. "You'll have to ask the White House about that," she said. Thanks for the tip. But she *knows* someone in the White House. Genial guy, approachable. Maybe she'd have more luck?

■ Has Hillary been offering overnight stays in the White House to Senate campaign donors? No, says flack Joe Lockhart: Only "friends," "supporters," "political officials," and "prominent members of the arts community" have stayed at the Pennsylvania Avenue Inn. Put the spectacle of gross-out money-raising aside for a moment, and focus on that last phrase. What prominent artists do the Clintons know—especially compared with past presidents? Franklin Pierce gave Nathaniel Hawthorne a patronage job; Theodore Roosevelt had Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Henry Adams to his table. Even JFK, the touch football-playing socialite, had Callas and Casals perform. The Clintons play host to monsters of Hollywood: Barbra Streisand, Alec Baldwin. It's not their cultural illiteracy (which most politicians share), but their desire to appear otherwise, that is so—Clintonian.

■ On *Oprah*, Al Gore claimed that "My number one proposal is to have high-quality universal preschool for every child in every family in every community all across the country." Immediately, Gov. Bush issued a press release saying Gore had been misleading, since his plan does not cover three-year-olds. Point taken. But the more important question is whether those three-year-olds should be covered. On this point, the Bush campaign was unclear. Instead of focusing on expanding Head Start, Gov. Bush might have pointed out that 70 percent of parents of young children prefer to stay home with their kids. What Gore's "working families" need is a tax cut that would let them do so, not another entitlement program.

■ A judge has dismissed Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley's $433 million lawsuit against the gun industry. The mayor wants companies like Beretta, Colt, Smith & Wesson, and Browning to pay for nearly half a billion dollars in police, medical, and other expenses he says gun injuries have cost the city. But Judge Stephen A. Schiller reasoned that gunmakers could hardly control the illegal uses to which people put their products; one might as well hold the cutlery industry liable for manufacturing the kitchen knife which the irate wife plunges into her hapless husband's heart. One might, for that matter, just as well sue the city government for the costs of not letting citizens defend themselves with guns.

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Drug Price Controls: A "Cure" Worse Than the Disease

by Alex Tabarrok, Ph.D.

Earlier this year, the State of Maine passed a law to try to force down drug prices. If drug manufacturers and distributors do not lower prices after "negotiations" with the state, Maine can threaten fines of up to $100,000 for "excessive" prices, and even impose price controls. Several other states reportedly are preparing similar legislation.

Maine's politicians were especially persuaded by claims that drug prices are substantially lower in Canada. In fact, although some drugs are cheaper in Canada, other drugs are more expensive. Government studies suggesting that pharmaceutical prices are much lower in developed nations like Canada, Britain and Germany have been severely criticized by Wharton School economist Patricia Danzon ("Price Comparisons for Pharmaceuticals: A Review of U.S. and Cross-National Studies", AEI, 1999).

Danzon found that the government studies surveyed only a handful of drugs. Also, these studies did not account for the quantity of drug prescriptions. Suppose, for example, that seven drugs are more expensive in the U.S. than in Canada and three are cheaper. If the three which are cheaper are prescribed more often than the seven which are more expensive, in which country are drugs truly less expensive? Finally, the government studies sometimes compared wholesale prices to retail prices. When these errors are corrected, prices in the United States are not on average more expensive (in fact, they are often less expensive) than in other developed nations.

It is true that drugs are cheaper in less-developed countries, but this is a benefit, not a cost to U.S. consumers. Because consumers in less-developed nations cover some of the R&D costs, U.S. consumers are better off than they would be if firms charged the same price everywhere.

Put simply, if firms had to charge a single low price throughout the world there would be much less money to spend on R&D and fewer new drugs. If firms had to charge a single high price throughout the world, consumers in less-developed countries could not afford to buy any new drugs, and U.S. consumers would pay all of the R&D costs. Allowing a firm to charge the appropriate price for each market – that is, different prices in different parts of the world – benefits consumers everywhere.

> ***The US should call on our trading partners to let the market set pharmaceutical prices***

This is not to say that there are no "free-riders" in the world community – countries which refuse to enforce patent rights, or use price controls to force companies to sell their products at below-market prices. But the answer to this problem is not for the U.S. to join the free-riders. Joining the free-riders would mean less research and fewer new drugs. Instead, the United States should continue to insist upon the protection of intellectual property rights in other countries, and should equally call on our trading partners, such as Japan and France, to let the market set pharmaceutical prices, not government bureaucrats. Acting at home, the United States could lower the cost of drug development by reforming its tort system, which imposes large costs on pharmaceutical manufacturers, and the entire healthcare sector, and by further streamlining the drug approval process.

The U.S. pharmaceutical industry is in a sense a victim of its own success. Overall spending on drugs has doubled in the past decade, but not because of price increases. Spending has increased because innovation has increased. Revolutionary new medicines have been discovered for the treatment of heart disease, Alzheimer's, diabetes, osteoporosis, arthritis, depression, obesity, blood pressure and other illnesses. In other words, we're spending more on drugs because we're using drugs more, and substituting pharmaceutical therapy for surgery, hospitalization, longterm care, and other forms of treatment.

The new drugs are so much better than the previous generation that if one controls for quality, it's clear that the cost of treating these diseases has actually been falling, not rising. Nevertheless, the increased spending on drugs has made the pharmaceutical firms a target for politicians seeking electoral advantage over sound public policy. Politicians may be focused on the next election. We can hope, however, that U.S. consumers of pharmaceuticals will take a longer view. Will consumers ten years from now be able to choose from a new generation of revolutionary drugs? They won't, if price controls are imposed today.

Dr. Alex Tabarrok is research director at The Independent Institute in Oakland, CA. This essay is adapted from Dr. Tabarrok's article originally published May 31, 2000 in The Patriot-News in Harrisburg, PA. To order a copy of the Institute's new book, "American Health Care: Government, Market Processes and the Public Interest", please visit http://www.independent.org or call +(800) 927-8733.

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■ On one day in September, the Ohio supreme court ruled on two "wrongful birth" cases. In one, Patricia and Lawrence Hester were suing their doctors, arguing that their seven-year-old daughter Alicia should have never been born, or as their lawyers put it, that she had "suffered damage based on the fact of her being born rather than aborted." In the second case, Theresa and James Simmerer sued their doctor for botching her sterilization. Fertile, she gave birth to a son with a fatal heart condition. Ohio's top court ruled against both claims, but there has been a recent trend toward high cash rewards in similar "wrongful birth" and "wrongful life" cases. The concepts are macabre, and let's hope their lives are short.

■ Congress passed a bill to liberalize trade with China. It was right to do so. Free trade benefits America's economy, and may strengthen China's entrepreneurial class. Maintaining or increasing trade barriers, on the other hand, would not advance any of our strategic objectives vis-à-vis China. Those objectives should be furthered in other ways: by providing a missile defense for Taiwan and South Korea, for instance. Trade, and carry a big stick.

■ The Danes are about to vote in a referendum on whether to scrap their currency in favor of the euro. Within a year or so, the British may well be holding a similar referendum on sterling. Already a rather friendless orphan, the euro has a fierce enemy in Margaret Thatcher. At a dinner for senior Conservatives, including party leader William Hague and some big donors, she argued for keeping the pound. In her time as prime minister, "No, no, no" was her robust answer to the demands made on Britain by the European Union, and it remains her answer today. Once she called Tony Blair a "patriot." Now she accuses him of a "cynical and ever more transparent ploy": hiding the truth that in joining the euro he has the wider aim of "abolishing Britain" as an independent nation. So it's Thatcher vs. Blair. Place your bets.

■ Britain has also been roiled by a few thousand truckers. For the most part self-employed or contract workers, they are complaining about the price of fuel: The government levies a tax on it of over 70 percent, yielding the highest price in Europe and forcing many truckers out of business. The government of Tony Blair likes the tax take and could not care less about lobbying from small fry. In response, and individually motivated, truckers converged in a blockade on every one of the country's oil refineries. Within days there was no gas, the roads were empty, hospitals were closing, and panic buying emptied supermarkets. Nobody was hurt, but the country came to a standstill, as if struck by plague. Various polls show that over 90 percent of the country backs the truckers, and that for the first time since 1992 the Conservatives suddenly enjoy at least as much support as Labour. The truckers have driven home, vowing to blockade the refineries again in 60 days if nothing is done to meet their demands. In the face of a classic taxpayers' revolt, the Blair government so far has shown only mismanagement, panic, and bullying.

It's Getting Nippy

Back when a tight-lipped Tony Blair
Behaved like Bad King John
While truckers clogging channel ports
Chain-smoked and sipped bouillon,
A frisson of forgotten fear
Threw Al Gore off his feed,
As anxious dot-com daddies oiled
Junior's velocipede.

—W. H. von Dreele

■ Hollywood roundup. "A woman sleeps with a sleazy gangster to get her bank robber husband out of jail, promising to do another bank job for him. When they are doublecrossed, they flee the mob and the cops while questioning their own loyalty to each other. The unrated version includes a steamier scene with Basinger and Baldwin." Thus the plot of the 1994 movie *Getaway*, which consisted almost entirely of scenes of gross violence interspersed with scenes of explicit sex. The movie's star, Democratic activist Alec Baldwin, has now announced that should George W. Bush be elected, he will leave the United States. His wife, Kim Basinger, warns us that we had better believe what Baldwin says, because "Alec is the biggest moralist I know." Meanwhile Julia Roberts, who ascended to glory playing the part of a hooker with a heart of gold in *Pretty Woman*, declared at a Gore fundraiser that she could never vote Republican because "'Republican' is right between 'reptile' and 'repugnant' in the dictionary." President Eisenhower warned his countrymen to beware the growing might of the military-industrial complex. The showbiz-activist complex is not to be bewared, exactly; but it would be nice if it could be ignored.

■ In that reactionary old state of Texas, two people can get married only if one of them is a man and the other a woman. But "man" and "woman" defined how, exactly? By chromosomes, ruled an appeals court of that state. Slipping deftly through this legal loophole, Jessica Wicks married Robin Manhart at the Metropolitan Community Church of San Antonio. Jessica, you see, was born a man, but subsequently underwent an operation to change gender. Mere surgery cannot affect one's chromosomes, of course, so all was legal and above board. Whether proponents of "gay marriage" can claim this as a victory for their cause is, like so much in the moral landscape of today's America, unclear.

■ Founding mother of the American feminist movement Gloria Steinem, 66, got married on September 3 at the home of her friends Wilma Mankiller and Charlie Soap. The lucky

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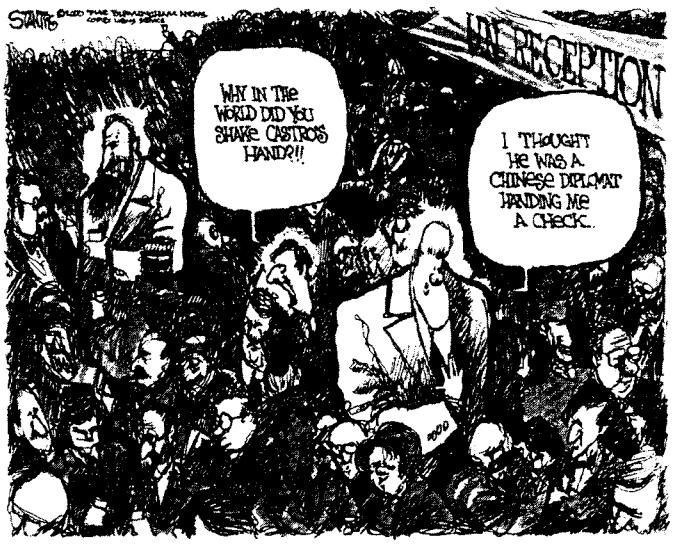
guy is entrepreneur David Bale, 61, whose achievements include introducing America to the skateboard. In related news, Elizabeth Taylor, in her first address as president of the National Organization for Women, declared that "all men are rapists." . . .

■ Roger Kahn wrote a minor classic about the "boys of summer." But August turns into September and October, and herewith we create a prose poem out of phrases in a write-up in the *New York Times*. "The Boys of Autumn": "The playoffs are on the horizon now, starting October 3, and O'Neill's nagging hip injury . . . Bernie Williams, who has a rib cage strain and a calf strain . . . First baseman Tino Martinez sat out Friday night's game because of a sore left elbow and left leg, and he probably will sit out today . . . Chuck Knoblauch, the Yankees' leadoff hitter, felt increased pain in his right elbow . . . Torre decided to rest catcher Jorge Posada Friday night . . . Outfielder David Justice is playing with a sore right groin muscle . . . Only ten days have passed since Cone's left shoulder was jarred out of its socket in Kansas City . . . Ramiro Mendoza will have arthroscopic surgery Thursday." The shadows lengthen in the stadium. Now the playoffs. Then the Series. Soon, spring training, 2001. After many a summer dies the swan.

■ The pre-election culture war will heat up in early October, when the Turner Classic Movies cable channel will begin airing 32 films reflecting the political ideologies of Right and Left. The 16 conservative movies were chosen on behalf of NATIONAL REVIEW (and will be introduced) by Spencer Warren, who has written eloquently about the conservative-film canon in cover stories. Warren's first will be *Sergeant York*, airing on Wednesday, October 4 at 8 P.M.; among the other highlights, scheduled for this and succeeding Wednesdays throughout October, will be *The Fountainhead* and *The Song of Bernadette*. (The 16 films chosen for the Left by Stuart Klawans of *The Nation* will air beginning Thursday, October 5.)



■ Prof. James Carberry, reader and supporter of NR, frequent guest on our cruises, was a professor of chemical engineering of international standing, on the faculties of Notre Dame (where he also coached intramural football), Stanford, Princeton, and Cambridge University, where he was a lifetime fellow. His knowledge of philosophy was extensive. On Thomas Aquinas he was an expert. He knew Dante in depth. He has succumbed to cancer at his home in South Bend, leaving a large gap in the structure of being. R.I.P.

GAY MARRIAGE

Vermont and the Nation

THE movement for gay rights has advanced considerably over the last decade, winning changes in public opinion and in law. But in its recent push for gay marriage, it may have overreached. The testing ground is in Vermont.

Last December, the state supreme court ordered the legislature to establish gay marriage or a simulacrum thereof called "civil unions." The public favored neither. Twenty-five thousand Vermonters signed a petition against civil unions. When town meetings were held, not a single town supported civil unions. And opposition in the polls grew as people with reservations realized that they were not alone.

Nonetheless, the legislature approved civil unions and Gov. Howard Dean, a Democrat, signed the bill (avoiding a public signing ceremony in order, he said, to "start the healing"). It may cost Dean reelection: Ruth Dwyer, a Republican, is running a strong campaign against him on the issue. Five Republicans who supported civil unions were defeated in primaries. The legislature accepted the court's edict. The public, already angry about a previous court decision upending the state's system of school financing, has not.

If gay marriage is defeated in Vermont—after being voted down in California, Alaska, and Hawaii, where there were referendums on the subject—the cause ought to be doomed. But for that to happen, national leaders will have to give voice to the public's sentiment.

Many Democrats have been disingenuous on the topic of gay marriage. Al Gore, for instance, claims to be opposed to it. But he also opposed a California ballot initiative passed last March codifying marriage as a heterosexual institution because the initiative was "mean-spirited." So he is against gay marriage, and also against doing anything to prevent it. But how much better, really, is the Republicans' silence on the topic? George W. Bush says that he opposes gay marriage, but he has avoided comment about the developments in Vermont. Dick Cheney has said that "[d]ifferent states are likely to make different decisions based on the wishes and desires of the people of the state, and that's perfectly acceptable."

Cheney is misdescribing what is happening in Vermont. What we have here is not the people of one state clamoring to do something differently from their neighbors. Rather,

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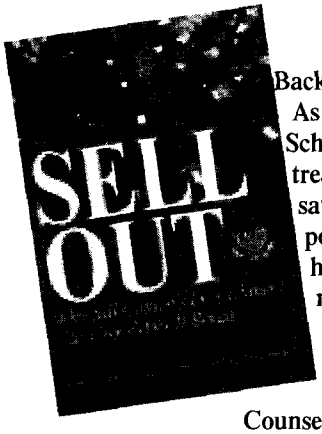
Breaking News From NewsMax.com . . .

"Fighting vicious Chicago mobsters was nothing compared to dealing with certain members of Congress!"

—David P. Schippers, former Chief Counsel,
House Judiciary Committee



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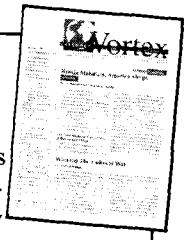

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activists are attempting to have gay marriage imposed on every state by the judiciary of one state, over the resistance of the people of that state. The legal game plan is obvious. Use the courts to get civil unions in Vermont. File lawsuits to get other states to recognize Vermont's unions. Then get those states to extend the same "right" to their citizens. Finally, have the courts make civil unions full-fledged marriages.

Or maybe not "finally." The courts having redefined marriage as a sex-blind institution, what's to stop further redefinitions? Why, for instance, should marriage remain confined to two people? Advocates of gay marriage scoff at the specter of polygamy. But polygamy has been practiced by far more societies than gay marriage has. The modern practice of divorce has already moved us toward a sort of serial polygamy. That change has not been good for children. Neither, in all likelihood, would be a redefinition of marriage that removed from it any lingering connection to the begetting of children.

There is no need for politicians to express hostility toward homosexuals, or to appeal to others' hostility. The state should not interfere in their private lives or deny them the rights everyone possesses. But those rights do not include a right to marry someone of the same sex. And with so much at stake, would-be leaders of the country have a responsibility to explain how they intend to keep the institution of marriage from unraveling.

CAMPAIGN 2000

Voyeur Nation

OUR old friend, the culture war, has come back, although now Democrats and Republicans are side-by-side, passing the same ammunition. Joe Lieberman and Lynne Cheney—Gore's running mate, and Bush's running mate-in-law—both testified before Congress on the bad effects of our violent and sexualized popular culture. The GOP vainly tries to call foul—isn't Gore raising money from the very people his sidekick is denouncing?—but surely the larger point is that both sides have spotted the same opportunity.

The debate is cast in terms of children: Does World Championship Wrestling warp young minds? Do *Tales from the Crypt* wash off young backs? But this is only a part of the picture. Todd S. Purdum, in a *New York Times* think piece, quotes Irma Zandl, a marketing expert, on the phenomenon of "generational blur," the conflation of teen and adult fashions. Purdum adds that the blurring is also psychological: Middle-aged women dressing like Britney Spears are engaged in "a disquieting sexual competition with their children." Competition is in fact the least of it. Adults use their own images of teen sexuality and impulsiveness voyeuristically, for stimulation and wish fulfillment (Miss Spears and her cohort may be the performers, but adults are the producers, directors, and marketers).

Adults do to teenagers what whites have long done to blacks: make them projective screens of lust and will. When Norman Mailer wrote "The White Negro," a paean to black drug addicts and muggers, he was expressing an outré view. Now such fantasies are a major industry.

The fact of adult desire—and the money it generates—suggests there is more at work here than can be cured by an election-cycle congressional hearing.

CULTURE WATCH

The New Olympiad

THE Olympics celebrate the peaks of physical excellence—human bodies, trained to perform specialized feats of strength, speed, and grace. Our admiration is heightened by our awareness of the underlying transience, even as measured against the brief span of human life. In ten years, all these demigods will be duffers, like the rest of us.

How to explain this to the feeble-minded? That, judging by the network's coverage, must be the problem NBC felt itself faced with. Its solution, as in several Olympiads past, is to present no great athlete without a treacly biographical package. This filler takes attention from the achievements themselves, and puts it instead on *People* magazine-type trials and struggles. It thereby tells us that, except for our high jumps, we are just like those athletes. The coverage also cleans up athletics by removing the boredom and dead time of competition, which are analogous to the boredom and dead time of training. Finally, the kitschy soundtracks of debased pop guide us through the emotions we are supposed to feel.

The contrast with Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* is painful. Riefenstahl was in love with Hitler, and her film has authoritarian framing devices. But the bulk of it simply gives us athletes, giving their best: sailors; marathoners; Jesse Owens; a hapless steeplechaser, vainly trying to navigate a water hazard. There is a stillness to her film that invites us to look, and think our own thoughts. The Nazi groupie gave us more freedom than the modern TV network.

NADER AND BUCHANAN

One Cheer

REFORMERS toy with schemes for reforming the political process: plural voting; concurrent majorities; proportional representation. If we could cast votes for presidential candidates on the basis of individual issues, then Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader would each deserve one vote for correct positions that they uniquely hold.

Buchanan is a lonely voice in favor of immigration reform. Gore, of course, wants a maximum influx—these are his voters—while Bush tries to woo Hispanics by trotting out his Spanglish and addressing conclaves of La Raza, the umbrella

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organization of radical groups funded by the Ford Foundation. Though Buchanan's atmospherics can be pugnacious—four years ago he waved a rifle over his head in southern Arizona—his actual positions are sensible: increasing the Border Patrol; freezing H1-B visas, which amount to indentured servitude; reviving the bracero program for transient agricultural workers; aiming for an overall "pause." Neither our founding principles nor our history dictate a rigid line on immigration, which has ebbed and flowed over time. After a 35-year-long high, it is time for a breather.

Drugs, especially pot, are a ritual political scapegoat. Though medical-marijuana initiatives have passed in every state in which they have been offered, and polls consistently show hefty popular support for the issue, outside of Hawaii the political class shuns medical pot, in fear of the demon weed. Legalization for recreational use is even more remote; President Clinton, noted Puritan, felt compelled to say that he never inhaled. Ralph Nader, alone among the candidates anyone has heard of, has called for legalizing marijuana, and for "new approaches" to "reduc[ing] the drug problem."

Buchanan and Nader will, happily, never make it to the White House. Neither did James G. Birney, twice candidate of the Liberty party. But his issue—slavery—was important, and ignored. So are immigration and drugs.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: If the wisdom is that George W. Bush selected Dick Cheney to compensate for a lack of foreign-affairs experience, are we to conclude that Al Gore selected Joe Lieberman to compensate for a lack of experience with ethics?

Yours very truly,
W. Patrick Resen
San Ramon, Calif.

Dear Mr. Resen: *Res ipsa loquitur!*
Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Bill: Herewith, a bawdy contribution to the political scene. I call it:

EMERGENCY MEDICINE

1) Ice the swelling
For no telling
How long it may take to deep-six it.
2) Fix it
In a splint
By Flynt.
3) Lie:
"Utenant Al, not I
Invented the verb 'is,'
Depending on how bus
Iness plays in Nevada's principal
town."
4) Get a good "mouth" to bring the
swelling down.

Cordially,
Johannes Eff
[Jack Kiley]
Rockville, Md.

Dear Bill: I got carried away. Here is my second versification for the political season. Hope you get carried away too.

Best,
J.E.

FIRST AID FOR A FLY

I got injured coming down
In too much haste. Tough luck?
There must be someone in town
Who can fix a *!#*
Ing link on my landing gear!
It's an open-and-shut case
Of bias against an engineer
Ing marvel. It's time we face
Up to what I do for the ecology,
And I feel for babes in the womb, too.
I mean, what kind of episstemology
Would argue that a priapic can do
Anything he wants to an
endangered fly?
Who killed Cock Robin's reputation?
Not I.

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: While reading Mr. Ponnuru's fine article on judicial lawlessness disguised as judicial review ("Supreme Hubris," July 31), I had a less-than-original thought:

I would rather be governed by the first 200 names in the Philadelphia phone book than by the federal judiciary—as I presently am.

Sincerely,
John Coffey
Ardmore, Pa.

Dear Mr. Coffey: Neat point. Though I'd make that 2,000, not 200. No elitism in this house!

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Your use of the term "dolichocephalic" in describing the nephew of George W. Bush in a recent column seemed to me to be both awkward and gratuitous.

Readers unfamiliar with the word might think it was a derogatory statement. I'm sure that you meant it as a compliment, since it reflects your own cranial shape, but did it enhance the narrative?

Cordially,
Lawrence A. Post, M.D.
Clayton, Calif.

Dear Dr. Post: Oh, come on, Doc. Given all the fancy words used in your (wonderful) profession, you should not deny others the resources of the language.

The word is basic somatological measurement, where the vertical length of the head is proportionately greater than its width. Mickey Rooney would be brachycephalic. It's not derogatory, merely descriptive.

Do you remember John Carradine? Leslie Howard? They were very dolichocephalic.

Cordially,

—WFB

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 ■

The Stakes

What happens if Gore wins?

RAMESH PONNURU

IMAGINE a Birkenstock on your face—forever.

That's pretty much the way conservatives picture a Gore administration. It's easy for them to forget that for the non-ideological voter, the stakes in this election are low. There is no crisis to resolve, no imminent threat to confront. Washington seems less important than ever before. It was plausible to think in 1984 that if Walter Mondale won the election, the consequences—for the economy, for America's position in the world, for taxes—would be dire. It's a lot harder to say that about Al Gore.

Some of Gore's policies, to be sure, would be quite destructive. His prescription-drug plan would probably lead to price controls that would cripple the pharmaceutical industry and slow medical progress. But one could forgive the casual observer of the presidential race for concluding that the choice between Gore and George W. Bush is inconsequential: a choice between bigger or smaller tax cuts; a less or more comprehensive missile-defense system; weaker or tougher regulation of HMOs. Even on Social Security, where the difference between the candidates appears to be stark, the real difference may be a matter of degree. Gore, like Bush, would bring millions more Americans into the stock market. Either candidate's policy, then, would create more favorable conditions for the eventual replacement of Social Security by individual investment accounts.

Yet conservatives are not wrong to consider this a high-stakes election. It is, to be specific, a high-stakes election *for conservatives*. For at least 40 years, their unifying goal has been to repeal the welfare state, or at least force it to retrench. Conservatism, considered as a movement dedicated to that goal, is on life support. Gore's election could be the final blow.

Gore's election would be the culmination of Bill Clinton's project of relegitimizing government in the eyes of the middle class. Clinton's accomplishment was not to change public policies so much as to change the political climate. The policies he enacted were mostly trivial. (Among the proudest boasts of his administration is that he forced employers to give parents time off to take care of sick kids. The leave did not, however, have to be paid.)

Clinton's success was political, and that success can best be measured by looking at his opponents. Just as Ronald Reagan forced the Democrats to acquiesce in many of his policies—by 1988, not even Jesse Jackson was talking about restoring 70 percent tax rates—so Clinton has made it impossible for Republicans to make a direct attack on big government. The Republican platform no longer calls for the elimination of the Department of Education. George W. Bush's antigovernment rhetoric is muted at best. Anyone who still doubts that "compassionate conservatism" is a retreat from small-government conservatism just hasn't been listening to the governor: "Our state of Texas is a compassionate state," Bush said in August, adding, "We're actively signing up children to the Children's Health Insurance program."

If Bush is elected, it would still be possible to make *indirect* attacks on the welfare state. Tax cuts would at least arrest the federal government's growth; tort reform would weaken the liberal coalition; freer trade would discipline the regulatory state; private Social Security accounts would nudge the electorate rightwards. With the White House in their control, Republicans could begin rebuilding their party in California. With both the White House and Congress, they might even be able to start making inroads among black voters.

If Gore is elected, on the other hand, even this sort of progress would be unachievable. Conservatives would be hard pressed to prevent the federal government from growing, let alone to shrink it. Gore would be able to use the expected federal surpluses of the next few years to create new entitlements. Long after the surpluses vanish, the entitlements would linger on—as would the statist constituencies they would create.

Conservatives would be marginalized in the courts as well. A few more Supreme Court appointments by Democrats would ensure that school choice will be strangled in the crib. The Court would be guaranteed to protect abortion from any serious regulation for another generation, and might even create a constitutional right to public funding for it. The Court would rule that preferences based on race and sex were permissible, then mandatory. How much further the Court would go on issues such as euthanasia would depend mostly on how much running room the justices thought they had.

It is a commonplace to say that the biggest prize to win in November is the power to nominate Supreme Court justices. What is less often remarked is that it's more important for the Right. If Bush named a few justices, on most issues liberals would live on to fight another day. Assume, for instance, that Bush nominated judges he thought would overrule *Roe* v. *Wade*; that these nominees were confirmed by the Senate; and that a majority of the Court then voted to overturn *Roe*. Even under these heroic assumptions, liberals would still be able to defend legal abortion in legislatures, in

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referenda, and in state courts. Pro-lifers, on the other hand, are locked out of normal politics, and a few more Gore nominees would add a deadbolt. The same asymmetry applies to school choice: A favorable decision would still leave the teachers' unions with plenty of resources, but an adverse one would lock kids in failing schools, with conservatives unable to open the doors from the outside.

So Gore would move public policy to the left, and make it hard to reverse that slide. Campaign-finance regulations would no doubt be designed to hobble conservatives, although they have been known to backfire. (Thank goodness for the law of unintended consequences.) The Kyoto protocol on global warming would give international bodies the power to impose liberal energy policies on America. Even if Republicans rebounded in 2002—quite likely, since redistricting will almost certainly yield a more favorable map for them—the damage would be hard to undo. But it gets worse. The effects of Gore's election on policy would be compounded by its likely effects on the Republican party.

The backbiting after a loss would be intense; almost everyone in the party has a lot invested in Bush, often literally. "Look at Wall Street in 1929 and then you'll figure out what it'll look like," says Marshall Wittmann, a political analyst at the Hudson Institute. John McCain's supporters could certainly be counted on to tell us what might have been. So too religious conservatives, libertarians, business leaders, etc. It's possible that the result of this free-for-all would be a smarter conservatism. But Republican elites might very well draw foolish lessons from a defeat. The party might just move left, enthusiastically embracing policies it has previously adopted only with extreme reluctance and fine-print qualifiers. If a President Gore were able to keep his liberal supporters in line and run a centrist administration, the GOP might even move in a Buchananite direction. In either case, the party would put most of its hopes in a well-timed recession.

The political strength of the Right would be reduced by one final factor: its own demoralization. Religious conservatives, instructed by the courts that they will never be allowed to enact their deepest aspirations, might head for the hills. They will have been essentially told to leave politics, and some of them will accept the invitation. If Gore wins, there would also be an exodus of smart young people from Republican ranks. They will leave the GOP for the same reason people are leaving the military: Morale in the institution will be low, and brighter opportunities will beckon elsewhere. The cost of that loss of talent would be hard to gauge.

All in all, then, there would be very few silver linings for conservatives in a Gore presidency. Which is why they should do whatever they can to ensure that there isn't one. **NR**

■ **CAMPAIGN 2000 II** ■

Clueless

What women don't know about politics

KATE O'BEIRNE

THE suburban Missouri mom who recently told the *Washington Post*, "I know there's a Bush and there's a Gore," represents the large number of inattentive women voters who could swing this election, despite their lack of specific knowledge about the candidates. Many polls attribute Al Gore's current lead to a double-digit advantage among female voters, who perform more poorly than men in most surveys measuring political knowledge. In his chat with Oprah, George W. Bush could have best helped himself with uninformed women voters by suggesting that she add some remedial reading on politics to her list of recommended books.

The evidence of this gender gap continues to mount. After this year's hotly contested primaries, a survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania found that women were considerably less likely than men to know who among the candidates was a former POW, a former basketball player, or a current governor. Women were also less likely than men to know the candidates' positions on such issues as universal health care and instant gun checks.

The population as a whole has an unimpressive grasp of national issues, but men routinely outperform women on these measures. In one of Kellyanne Fitzpatrick's surveys earlier this year, only 27 percent of women knew that Republicans control both the Senate and the House, in contrast to 46 percent of men who correctly identified the majority parties. In early September, when asked what comes to mind about candidate Bush, 23 percent of women (and 15 percent of men) either didn't know or refused to answer. (There was no need for a sophisticated analysis of the candidate, as acceptable responses included such insights as "guy running for president" and "father.")

While there is plenty of discussion about the gender gap that has boosted Gore in the polls, the gender gap in political knowledge is largely ignored. It's clear that women are significantly less interested than men in national policy, but Sen. Barbara Boxer reflects the conventional wisdom in her explanation of women's support for Gore:

By Roman Genn

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"Three reasons. Issues, issues, and issues."

In their exhaustive 1996 study, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter found that three-quarters of women score well below the male average on tests measuring knowledge of national politics. The gap has existed for 50 years, and it persists regardless of education and income levels. In a representative survey, men were significantly more likely to be able to identify Boris Yeltsin, explain the role of the Supreme Court, and state the unemployment rate. (There is a reverse gender gap when it comes to local politics, with women more likely to know what's going on closer to home; for example, more women than men were able to name their school superintendent.)

■

It's time for Bush to deploy some fear tactics of his own, against women voters' latest heartthrob.

■

Women's relative lack of knowledge about national politics produces the kind of fickle female voters who were supporting Bush just a few weeks ago but now back Gore. Unsurprisingly, Delli Carpini and Keeter point out that better-informed voters have more stable, internally consistent opinions, and are resistant to irrelevant information. The authors concede that issues matter to less-informed voters, too, but there is a weak correlation between these voters' stated positions on issues and the views of the candidate they choose to support.

With women significantly more likely than men to get their news from television, general impressions are more important to them than policy specifics. Gov. Bush is routinely advised to appeal to women by talking about "kitchen table" issues such as education and health care; given the detachment of so many women voters, he would practically have to be *at* their kitchen tables to focus their attention on the complicated differences between the candidates' proposals.

The fact is, women aren't swooning over Al Gore's 191-page economic plan. He has succeeded, rather, by playing to their anxieties about the economy, and their concerns about the safety net; that's why he labeled Bush's reforms "risky schemes." According to Karlyn Bowman, the American Enterprise Institute's polling expert, the risk-averse nature of women has an effect upon their approach to politics. Women's concern that a broad safety net of programs be available contrasts sharply with the general male view of government's role. In a recent ABC poll, 67 percent of men preferred a smaller federal government that provided fewer services, while only 46 percent of women wanted a reduced role for Washington. Married women are less likely to look to Uncle Sam for help in shouldering the load, and a majority of them support Bush.

Bowman notes that women as a group are a "lagging indicator" on the state of national affairs, and so, for example, are less likely than men to count on the strong economy, or trust in future budget surpluses. Al Gore has dispatched the character issue by reassuring women about his devotion to Tipper and the kids, while portraying Bush's agenda as threatening to the surplus and entitlements.

It's time for Bush to deploy some fear tactics of his own, against women voters' latest heartthrob. (It's clear that the governor hasn't been visible enough of late, with women by a 2-to-1 margin now declaring that Al Gore is the better-looking candidate). Bush has to explain that Gore's proposed spending orgy, fueled by a record level of high taxes, threatens to bring back the deficit; that Gore's prescription-drug plan will bankrupt Medicare just in time for the baby boomers' retirement, while crippling miraculous advances in drug therapies; and that the lives of young Americans are at risk as long as the dismal state of military readiness in the Clinton-Gore years is ignored, and as long as we continue the Clinton-Gore refusal to have an effective defense against missile attack. The governor should also remind a reform-minded electorate that the Hollywood establishment, predatory trial lawyers, and corrupt union bosses will have veto authority over a President Gore's agenda.

Women are natural worriers. It's time Gov. Bush gave them something to worry about. **NR**

■ CAMPAIGN 2000 III ■

The Comeback

How Gore did it

RICHARD LOWRY

In retrospect, it was a great advantage for Al Gore that one of his chief vulnerabilities was another person: Bill Clinton. All it took for Gore to improve his standing with the public was to say, "Look, I'm not him." And he did. First, he selected as his running mate Joe Lieberman, whose scolding of the president, followed by acquittal votes on both impeachment counts, qualified him for the ticket in two ways: It gave Lieberman the requisite distance from Clinton, and it showed that his "independence of mind" wouldn't get in the way of his partisanship. Then, there was The Kiss, of which Bill and Hillary would have been constitutionally incapable (holding hands in times of dire political peril seems as far as they can go). Finally, at the Los Angeles convention, Gore declared himself "his own man."

Suddenly, Gore was out from Clinton's shadow and, buoyed by the polls, started coming across as less arrogant and desperate, and more manic, goofy, earnest, and relentless. Political salesmanship, no matter what the cynics say, always depends for its success on at least a measure of truth; spin can go only so far without some basis in the facts. Which is why Gore was able to distance himself from Clinton so easily. Gore is the dutiful son, Clinton the slippery rascal. Trying to argue that they are cut from the same cloth was doomed to failure, simply because they're not.

Gore's latest reinvention—as Al Gore—cut the legs out from much of Bush's campaign. Bush had been shrewdly, and subtly, playing on frustration with Clinton all year long. His talk of bipartisanship and "changing the tone" and "honor and dignity" in the Oval Office was directed at Clinton's attack politics and constant carnival of scandal. It had the advantage of acknowledging how

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sick the public was of the Clinton scandals, both by promising to end them and by not actually mentioning them specifically. But in Los Angeles, Gore—now the family man passionately and irrepressibly in love with his wife—made the case that restoring "honor and dignity" to the White House wouldn't necessarily require electing a Republican.

And so the "character" attack on Al Gore began to look much less compelling. It probably never was enough to carry the election, considering that "trust" didn't work in 1992 and 1996 (or the 1998 congressional elections) against Clinton himself. This is why it was such a mistake for the Bush campaign to run a Buddhist temple ad at the first sign of trouble. It was another character attack at the very moment when such criticisms were losing their force. And the Buddhist temple itself was a worn talisman, rubbed so often over the previous two years that it had already lost any magic it held. Republicans have gained almost nothing from the Clinton scandals over the last eight years, so it made little sense to expect big dividends from their least compelling residue (the temple, "soft money" calls from the White House, and the like).

Also, the *way* Bush pursued the temple was awkward. The tone of the ad was sarcastic, so Bush could claim it was "lighthearted" rather than "negative." His admonitions against negative politics had served to box Gore in for much of the year. Every time Gore criticized him, Bush could point to the latest evidence of Gore's taste for Clinton-style attacks. But after the Democratic convention—with Clinton less a factor and Gore no longer attacking Bush quite so personally—Bush's insistence on staying positive only limited himself. It initially prevented him from responding vigorously to Gore, and prompted all sorts of ridiculous contortions once he did. (Now Bush maintains that he'll "change the tone" *after* he's elected.)

The talk of positive campaigning was the perfect complement to Bush's sunny compassionate conservatism. The fate of compassionate conservatism has run an oddly parallel course in the Republican primaries and now the general election. It proved an important table-setter, a way to establish that Bush is not Newt Gingrich, and to woo the press. But the thrust of compassionate conservatism is essentially defensive, perfect for coasting with a lead, but worthless when an opponent needs to be sharply challenged. So, after his New Hampshire debacle, Bush pivoted away from compassionate conservatism and became "the reformer with results," the outsider ready to change Washington. Now that Bush is struggling again, he has essentially returned to this message, making another hard, reformist zag after a soft, compassionate zig.

All year long there have been competing sensibilities at play in national politics. In New Hampshire, John McCain was the tough guy, while George W. Bush tried to touch "every willing heart." In the Democratic primaries, Al Gore was the fighter confronting the pacific and passive Bill Bradley. Even in sentimental, talk-show America, this "hard" sensibility still has its appeal. But after toughening up against McCain, Bush went soft again after the primaries, becoming the "can't we all get along?" scourge of partisanship of all sorts. What Gore managed at his convention was to identify himself with both hard and soft sensibilities at once: He's the give-'em-hell populist fighter—like McCain—but on behalf of the tender ministrations of the nanny state, from college-tuition tax credits to a prescription-drug benefit.

Gore's red-hot populist rhetoric served other purposes as well. It energized his flagging base. And it let him pose as a leader, by taking on "powerful"—and conveniently unpopular—interests. There was a risk to this rhetoric. It represented a return to an essentially discredited economic liberalism at a time of great prosperity and the democratization of wealth through the stock market. But Gore wasn't made to pay the price. His period of maximum vulnerability may have been during his greatest seeming strength, the surge right around the convention when he had both to appeal to his base and to reach a broader audience. He was like Admiral Nagumo in the Battle of Midway, with all his planes on the decks of his carriers, changing from bombs to torpedoes, vulnerable to attack—an attack that, in Gore's case, never came.

The Bush campaign was afraid to invoke the word "liberal," for fear of seeming ideological. And it wouldn't attack using any other term—"out-of-date"? "phony"? "stupid"?—for fear of

... in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1789

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seeming too "negative." Instead, Bush traveled the country in the week after Gore's convention handing out education grants to American Indians and black colleges. Now Gore is shuttling between business-bashing and talking up "middle-class families" instead of the "working families" from the convention (a phrase that smacked too much of class warfare). Gore recently delivered an economic speech, with ex-Treasury secretary Robert Rubin by his side, promoting ambitious growth-oriented, unpopulist-sounding goals such as increasing the number of high-tech jobs by 10 million and doubling the number of families with more than $50,000 in savings.

This served to highlight another weakness of compassionate conservatism: its total neglect of the middle class, and especially the economic interests of that class. The Bush campaign had a higher purpose than mere economics. It was going to usher in a new "responsibility era," lend a hand to the poor and left out, rally the "armies of compassion." All of this was high-minded and reflected the concerns of Bush, who may be pro-business in the down-and-dirty West Texas sense, but doesn't seem that interested in promoting Wall Street or the New Economy—all those smart-asses making loads of money without any bricks or mortar. So, Bush blew off economics in favor of photo-ops with minority children. He listened to Al Gore say his tax cut would "wreck" the economy, smiled, and talked some more about his heart.

There's time left to correct all this. With his "Blueprint for the Middle Class," Bush has awakened to the need to sell his program in economic terms and deconstruct Gore's populism piece by piece. Bush must become the defender of the middle class from the depredations of an overweening Washington. There is little doubt that Gore now has the clearer path to victory—keeping Bush tied up in clinches over details and tactics so the Republican never gets the freedom to land any real blows. Included in this effort will be lots of ridicule of Bush's attempt to redefine himself. But as Gore himself proved, there is nothing wrong with reinventing yourself, as long as voters like what you become. There's no shame in it. It's just that Bush, leading all year, never imagined he would be the one needing a makeover six weeks before the election. **NR**

■ THE STATES ■

Civil Revolt

Vermont stands up

STANLEY N. KURTZ

A CONSERVATIVE could be forgiven these days for feeling a little discouraged by the battle over gay marriage. All summer long, gays from around the country have been heading to Vermont to get "C.U.ed" (joined in "civil union"); in September, the Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage. Depressed? Don't be. A grassroots campaign to "take back Vermont" has swept across the Green Mountain State—a drive poised, not only to repeal or scale back Vermont's civil-unions law, but to return the only state with a Socialist representative in Congress to its conservative roots. And there is every reason to believe that what's happening now in Vermont might soon be repeated in states across the country.

A decade of leftist dominance has turned Vermont into a window onto the future of the culture wars. Once Ben and Jerry and their aging hippie friends settled on Vermont as a refuge, the state became a proving ground for utopian social experiments. Of course, the annoyingly conservative native Vermonters had to be circumvented somehow. Enter the state's supreme court—the liberal weapon of choice for disposing of irksome majorities.

In 1997, in a state with a 300-year tradition of government by town meeting, the court declared that local responsibility for schools was unconstitutional, thus forcing the legislature to pass Act 60, a statewide property-tax and school-funding system. Now all Vermont school districts are equal—equally poorly funded. The school system as a whole is beset by severe financial shortfalls and mediocre student performance.

Mr. Kurtz is an adjunct senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. His article "What Is Wrong with Gay Marriage" appears in the September issue of *Commentary*.

But Act 60 set a precedent. The court could now simply discover some hitherto-unknown right within the state constitution, and presto: The legislature would be forced to create yet another leftist social experiment. Conservatives started calling the court the "Five Supreme Legislators." They lived up to that name last December when they discovered in the Vermont state constitution what amounted to a right to gay marriage. Acting on orders from the court, the legislature rushed through a bill on civil unions, in blatant disregard of overwhelming opposition by town meetings across the state.

It was a classic case of "progressive" social engineering, but this time, things have not gone according to plan. A genuine grass-roots movement to "take back Vermont" has sprung up, dedicated not only to reversing course on civil unions, but to combating the judicial and legislative contempt for public opinion that has governed the state for the past half-dozen years. Thousands of homes throughout Vermont now display "Take Back Vermont" signs, and websites like Take It to the People, tbvt.org, and Vermont Speaks are flourishing.

Despite fierce opposition from the press, the take-back-Vermont movement appears to be winning. In last week's primary election, five of the Republican legislators who voted in support of civil unions—half of those targeted—were defeated. And Ruth Dwyer, a strong civil-unions opponent, handily won the Republican nomination for governor. But the bare results only begin to tell the story of what looks increasingly like a political earthquake.

For take-back-Vermonters, the civil-unions bill was the final insult. Many who were disgruntled by Act 60 three years ago—but didn't bother to vote—have now been propelled into action. In many towns, pre-election new-voter registration as much as quintupled. Turnout in the Republican primary was among the highest in 50 years. Marion Milne, one of the Republican supporters of civil unions, was swamped by the influx; she came in third, with only 18 percent of the vote. The magnitude of

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the defeat of the pro–civil-union legislators is all the more impressive in light of the campaign that was waged to convince Democrats to vote in support of the targeted Republicans in the open primary. Of course, this *was* only a primary; but some political analysts are optimistic about defeating supporters of civil unions in November. They are speculating about a turnover in the legislature of between 10 and 30 percent.

But even a sweeping victory for the opponents of civil unions would leave complications. There's still the problem of the Vermont supreme court's mandate. A constitutional amendment would solve things, but the amendment process in Vermont is cumbersome. The legislature could simply defy the court and repeal civil unions, but the court has threatened outright legalization of gay marriage in that case. The definition of civil unions could be broadened by eliminating the incest provisions, turning a civil union from de facto gay marriage into a special state-sponsored partnership for any roommates or family members, even those not in a sexual relationship; but that would only dilute the institution of marriage in a new way. That leaves the option of impeaching the judges. Vermont could be an interesting place to be over the next few years.

The chances are good that Dwyer, a staunch opponent of civil unions, will win the governorship. Howard Dean, Vermont's once-popular Democratic governor, got himself into a great deal of trouble when he signed the civil-unions bill behind closed doors. "Howard the Coward" signs now dot the landscape, and his approval rating has sunk from 63 percent to 41 percent. In 1998, Dwyer won 41 percent of the vote against Dean—but then she was unknown, and didn't have the civil-unions issue.

The press is doing its best to block the take-back-Vermont movement, and Dwyer along with it. Dispatches from the Associated Press constitute the meat of most press coverage of Vermont's political battles, and the AP stories have a leftward slant. Ross Sneyd, the AP reporter assigned to cover Vermont politics, is a past board member of *Out in the Mountains*, Vermont's gay online magazine, which is actively promoting the reelection of the supporters of civil unions. Sneyd, at least, makes an effort to preserve the appearance of fairness. The same cannot be said for Christopher Graff, chief of the AP's Vermont bureau, who churns out opinion pieces that openly rant against the opponents of civil unions.

But the press can't, by itself, turn back this tide. Too many people have been energized by the civil-unions issue, and by what is widely perceived as the arrogance of Vermont's political elites; the citizenry wants, once again, to govern itself.

The take-back-Vermont movement indicates how politics in the nation as a whole might look just a few years from now. Today, with the U.S. Supreme Court balanced precariously between liberals and conservatives, and with a series of hot-button social issues—from gay rights to affirmative action—left unresolved, both political parties are steering clear of controversy and trying to capture the middle. But what will happen after the next president replaces several justices and the Court moves definitively to the right or the left? At that point, America may begin to look as polarized as Vermont. A Gore victory, in particular, seems likely to lead to Vermont-like division. National gay marriage means a national "Take Back America" countermovement.

You might think the Democrats would be smart enough to avoid getting trapped into so dangerous a position, but the issue is not going away. Those who believe that the drive for gay rights is equivalent to the civil-rights struggle of the 1960s aren't going to hold back out of political prudence; that's why so many Vermont legislators were willing to risk their seats to begin with. And even if the state legislators in New York, California, and Rhode Island who plan to propose civil unions after the November election hesitate, for fear of losing their jobs, all it would take is a few more challenges before sympathetic judges to force the issue back onto state and national agendas—whether politicians like it or not. As the Green Mountains turn scarlet and orange this year, tourists visiting Vermont will see more that's about to fall than just the leaves: Arrogant legislators—and their leftist orthodoxies—look as if they've peaked, and are ready to drop. **NR**

■ POLITICS ■

Body Slam

The stupid and demagogic rhetoric of Jesse Ventura

JONAH GOLDBERG

IN *Conan the Barbarian*—one of the few Arnold Schwarzenegger films Jesse Ventura wasn't in—a tired king enlists the aid of an able-bodied and uncouth warrior to defeat his enemy. Conan defeats the king's enemies, and later wins the throne himself. This is a lesson conservatives should keep in mind, because Jesse Ventura surely does.

Ventura, out with a new book which is probably the prelude to a presidential bid, is one of the most popular politicians in America. For conservatives, he is a useful ally on tax cuts and limited government. He speaks honestly about obvious things, which puts him at odds with the pieties of political correctness: He said, for example, that many lives could have been spared at Columbine if a school official had only carried a gun. Sure, he favors legalizing prostitution and decriminalizing most drugs, but even this magazine favors the latter. So why should conservatives be so wary?

Because, simply put, he is a barbarian: valuable in battle but unfit to rule in his own right. Of course, in America we don't have barbarians; we have populists. But the effect can be the same. Ventura is perfectly willing to smash any existing institution and tear down any established norm in pursuit of personal glory.

In his new book, *Do I Stand Alone? Going to the Mat Against Political Pawns and Media Jackals*, Ventura denounces the media for valuing sensationalism over substance. He assails their tendency to "portray every story as a battle." He inveighs against the "spin doctors," and

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condemns politicians who put their own interests above those of their constituents. In short, he stands foursquare against every trend in American politics that made his political career possible in the first place and sustains it today.

"I'm not writing this book to convince you of anything," he assures readers. "I'm writing it to ask for your help. I need you to help me wake up America." He continues: "The problem, as I see it, is that too many people are trying to tell us what to think . . . and we're letting them!" This sort of rabble-rousing has been the keynote of Ventura's career. He won the Minnesota governor's office—with 37 percent of the vote—by activating hordes of voters who normally couldn't be bothered with politics. He ran hilarious commercials of a Governor Ventura action figure smashing Evil Special Interest Man. Democrats assumed that Ventura would steal votes from the GOP candidate, but in fact, the Republican base held firm while the Democrats hemorrhaged votes to Ventura.

This explains why Ventura—for all his talk of being opposed to both parties—is vastly more comfortable taking nasty potshots at those to his right: It costs him fewer votes. When asked to defend, for example, his statement that religion is a "sham and a crutch for weak-minded people," he explained that he didn't mean all religious people, just religious *conservatives*. Oh, that's much less offensive.

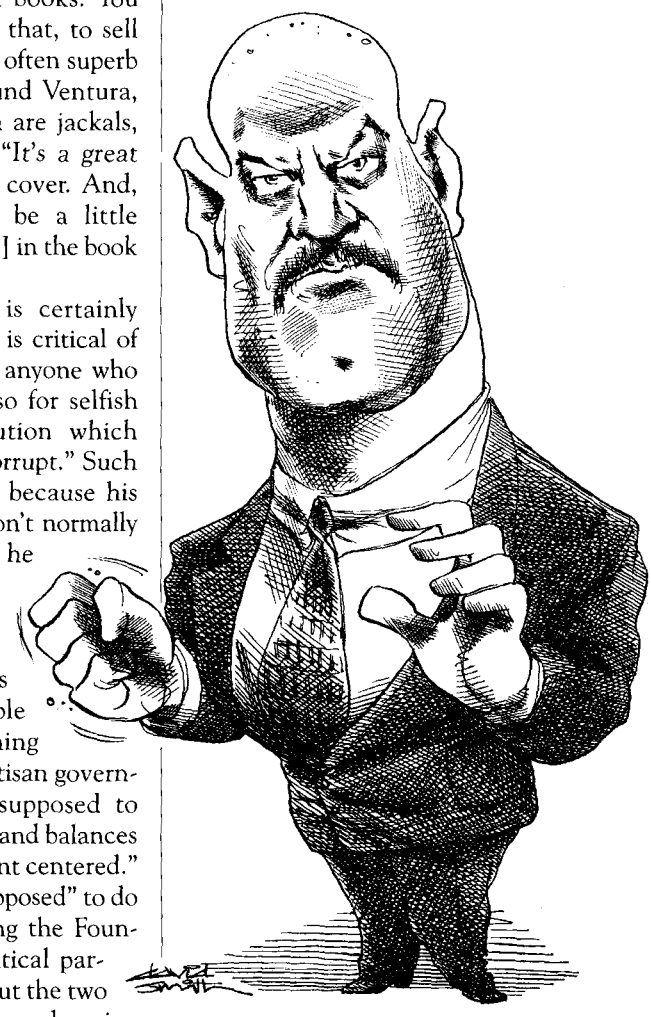
Because Ventura is generally fawned over by the national media, he is quick to point out that he thinks the only real "media jackals" are the reporters who know him best in Minnesota. Conservatives concerned about media bias will find little solace in Ventura's analysis. The reason he thinks the national media "do a far better job" than local outlets is that they let Ventura say whatever he wants. And besides, Ventura assures national interviewers that he's not that serious anyway. Interviewed on *The Today Show* by Katie Couric, he told her, "We always put provocative titles on books. You have to, Katie, you know that, to sell them." Tim Russert, who's often superb but gets weak-kneed around Ventura, asked him why the media are jackals, and Ventura responded, "It's a great name. It fits good on the cover. And, you know, you have to be a little provocative because [we're] in the book business."

The Ventura persona is certainly provocative: Anyone who is critical of him is beneath contempt, anyone who disagrees with him does so for selfish reasons, and any institution which makes his job harder is "corrupt." Such indictments work, largely because his appeal is to people who don't normally pay attention to politics; he can therefore excite knee-jerk gripers without offering much substance.

Indeed, Ventura offers arguments that only people who don't know anything think are profound. "Bipartisan government," he writes, "was supposed to work as a system of checks and balances to help keep our government centered." Well, actually it wasn't "supposed" to do anything at all, considering the Founders fiercely opposed political parties. Ventura continues, "But the two parties have gotten so wrapped up in trying to stay in power that they no longer have any time for us and our concerns." *Any* time? Really?

There's no consistency from day to day, or from paragraph to paragraph. It's merely "straight-talk" rambling and canned outrage. If something makes the average guy angry, it makes Jesse angry too. He's stunned that "special interest hustlers" and "career self-promoters" have political agendas. He thinks it's outrageous that incumbents can campaign when they're supposed to be at work, but he thinks he's boldly bucking the system by having lavish for-profit book tours on the government's time. He's proud of being a zealous advocate for Minnesota, but is stunned that politicians and activists put their own constituencies above the national interest.

Ventura often sounds like a souped-up version of the Lonesome Rhodes character from Elia Kazan's brilliant 1957 film *A Face in the Crowd*, in which a backwoods rube masters television to



Jesse Ventura by David Smith

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exploit popular resentments. In an honest off-camera moment, Rhodes declares, "This whole country is like my flock a' sheep. Rednecks, crackers, hillbillies, hausfraus, shut-ins, pea-pickers—everybody that's gotta jump when somebody else blows the whistle." Ventura's got these people on his side, but he's also got the moderately prosperous cubicle worker who isn't interested enough in politics to understand why government doesn't work as efficiently as his office mail room.

Ventura is willfully ignorant of the fact that most of the faults of the major parties stem from the fact that they are too democratic and too weak, not the reverse. One of the positive functions of political parties is to temper the demagogic spirit of people like Ventura in their own ranks. Untethered to any institution, Ventura is free to rant about the corruption of the cleanest political system in American history—and rave about his own courage for taking it on.

Candidates who exploit this facile outrage are nothing new; Adlai Stevenson once said an independent is a guy who wants to take the "politics out of politics," and that is certainly Ventura's schtick. His signature issue is to get rid of a whole house of the legislature, making Minnesota the second (after Nebraska) unicameral legislature in America. It's an interesting idea, and not without merit: Most upper legislatures in America were modeled on the U.S. Senate, in that representation was based not on population but on communities. The Supreme Court's one-man, one-vote rulings have made such systems unconstitutional, and made some legislative bodies redundant.

This is an ideal Ventura issue, because it's purely procedural. It's not about budget priorities or social issues, but about efficiency—and thus sounds great in soundbites. The image it invokes is the smashing down of barriers in the way of the people. And it's working for Ventura politically. But here, too, his approach is slash-and-burn; he says any legislator who disagrees with him is doing so purely out of greed, and any journalist who is critical is illegitimate for one reason or another.

This is an approach we don't need in national politics, and conservatives should not be afraid to say so. **NR**

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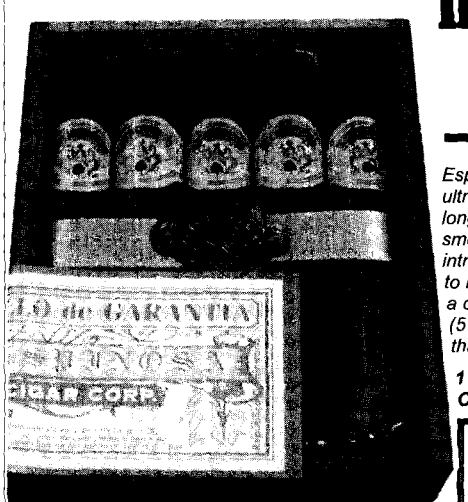

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■ HISTORY ■

Buffaloed

Fighting the truth about American Indians

JOHN J. MILLER

WHEN NASA launched the cremated remains of scientist Eugene Shoemaker aboard the Lunar Prospector nearly three years ago, the last thing it expected was a controversy. Here was a fitting tribute to a man who taught Apollo astronauts about the moon's geology and helped discover the famous Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet that slammed into Jupiter. The probe containing his ashes was scheduled to scan the moon for signs of water, and then, mission accomplished 18 months later, crash into the lunar surface: a fitting graveyard for a fellow like Shoemaker.

And yet the controversy came—but not from budget hawks in Congress worried about NASA's payload. Instead, it came from Navajo Indians, who called it a sacrilege. "Using the moon as a burial site for an astronomer is a desecration and gross insensitivity to all who respect and practice Native American religions," explained Albert Hale, then president of the Navajo Nation.

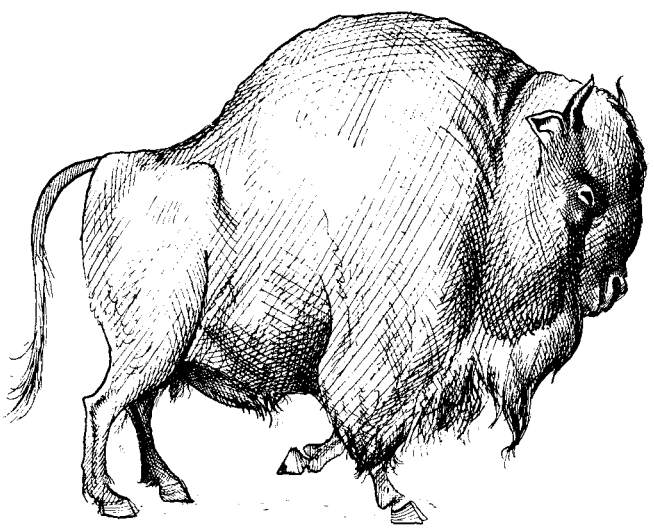
So what did NASA do? It apologized. "We sincerely regret any unintended offense," wrote a NASA official. "We look forward to hearing from you and learning more about how Navajo traditions might help inform NASA's pursuit of scientific knowledge."

It was surely one of the strangest episodes in the history of space exploration. Yet few people noticed it. The media go into conniptions whenever some little hamlet in the Bible Belt elects a creationist to the local school board, but the NASA–Navajo spat generated only a couple of newspaper stories in the Southwest.

Perhaps apologies emanating from the Clinton administration aren't considered news anymore. More likely, there's an unwritten rule at work here: It's not acceptable to question Indian religious beliefs—or anything else about them—even when they're asserted in seemingly bizarre contexts.

That's because American Indians occupy a unique moral high ground in the public imagination. Their systematic extermination and relocation is one of the most brutal acts in U.S. history. Most Americans know this intuitively, but they'd rather not think about it—so instead they choose simply to feel sorry for the Indians living today. This aura of victimhood has won Indians a whole series of special rights involving everything from building casinos to going on whale hunts.

Yet the past is not a simple morality play, and a new round of scholarship questions the popular image of Indians as innocent children of nature. There's a major battle going on over the ownership of history, and it pits academics against activists who insist that Indians be seen only in certain lights.



By Roman Genn

The veneration of Indians is nothing new: It goes back at least as far as the stories of Pocahontas and the first Thanksgiving. Its most recent manifestation is the Sacajawea dollar—which itself is just the latest in a long line of Indian-head coins dating back to the 19th century. There have been plenty of other Indian stereotypes, too, including the scalp-crazy "Injun" savages from old movies and the pulps. But when was the last time you saw one of these? They're almost as extinct as the buffalo that used to roam the Great Plains.

Which brings us to exhibit A: the buffalo. Indians were remarkably efficient buffalo killers, with individual hunters dressing in skins to get close shots, and groups of them driving whole herds off cliffs. It's becoming increasingly clear that Indians inflicted an enormous amount of damage on this Edenic symbol of wild North America. In his recent book *The Ecological Indian*, Shepard Krech III of Brown University writes that Indian belief systems contributed to overhunting. Many Plains Indians thought that if even a single buffalo were allowed to escape from hunters, it would alert others; as a result of this belief, the hunters would "kill as many as possible" whether they needed the buffalo or not.

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the buffalo's brush with extinction, however, was the demand for hides on the East Coast. Princeton historian Andrew C. Isenberg, author of *The Destruction of the Bison*, estimates that Indians were killing 600,000 buffalo each year by the 1840s—an unsustainable death rate. By the time white hide-hunters arrived on the scene, the buffalo were trapped in a downward spiral. "Without their involvement, the buffalo would probably have only lasted another 30 years," said Dan Flores of the University of Montana in the *New York Times*.

These professors all pay a price for their views: "It's anti-Indian stuff," sniffs the University of Colorado's Vine Deloria. Yet there's long been circumstantial evidence that Indians played a key role in the Pleistocene extinctions of well-known North American megafauna—mammoths, saber-tooth cats, giant ground sloths, and scores of other species whose bones are now on display near the dinosaur wings of natural-history museums. Proof of the Indians' involvement in nearly wiping out the buffalo is much stronger. Ignoring it now is like ignoring the fact that many black Africans participated in the slave trade—a historical truth of tremendous inconvenience to peddlers of victimhood theory.

There's even grimmer news in the

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recent scholarship. In September, the journal *Nature* published incontrovertible evidence that many southwestern Indians practiced cannibalism in ancient times. This was suspected for years, given the frequency with which butchered and cooked human bones turned up in archaeological digs. But some scholars believed this was proof of nothing more than rituals whose meaning is now lost, or perhaps the execution of people thought to be witches. Just because the Anasazi were tossing dismembered body parts into cooking pots doesn't necessarily mean they were also eating them, right?

■

Some Indians were noble, others ignoble; some ate buffalo meat, others had a taste for human flesh.

■

Last year saw the publication of the groundbreaking book *Man Corn: Cannibalism and Violence in the Prehistoric American Southwest*, by Arizona State University's Christy Turner II, a longtime advocate of the cannibalism theory. It was an important work, but some scholars decided to ignore it. "I was just at an archeological conference," said UCLA's Steven A. LeBlanc in the *Los Angeles Times*. "There were tenured professors there who said they were not going to read Christy's book. They don't want to think about it." But now scientists have found human fecal remains containing proteins that could only have gotten there from the consumption of human flesh. There hasn't been much of a response from the naysayers yet, except to recycle the familiar claim that the ancestors of today's Indians didn't do these things, because there's no mention of cannibalism in their oral traditions.

Who can blame the descendants of the Anasazi—today's Hopi, Pueblo, and Zuni peoples—for wishing the cannibalism stories weren't true? The charge of institutionalized cannibalism is embarrassing, and suggests a whole culture of vicious Jeffrey Dahmers. But in fact, cannibalism proves no such thing. It was not an uncommon practice in premodern societies. There's plenty of evidence of it occurring all over the globe, including Europe (mainly in the Stone Age). What's so surprising about cannibalism among ancient Americans?

A deeper understanding of all this requires scientific investigation. Researchers still don't know why the Anasazi ate human flesh, and they won't ever know unless they can do their work without political interference. Unfortunately, studying prehistoric America is becoming a difficult business. A 1990 law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, has given tribal activists a say in whether scientists can study ancient human remains, as well as the right to retrieve items in museum collections. There are dozens of examples of the government forcing researchers to surrender potentially important finds to Indian tribes for reburial, before even the most rudimentary examinations of them can take place. In August, the federal government refused to turn over the 10,000-year-old Spirit Cave Man to Nevada tribes petitioning for it—but won't let scientists examine it either. It's off-limits to everybody. The government is also expected to announce a decision in the landmark Kennewick Man case no later than September 24 (see "Remains of the Day," NR, March 8, 1999).

Many mysteries remain about the original peopling of North America—scientists still aren't sure when human settlers first arrived, or who they were. Yet if something like a Rosetta Stone were to surface, the government might very well force researchers to give it up because a handful of tribal activists considers it a sacrilege to study such things. The desires of Indians who don't participate in tribal activism—in other words, the majority of them, who might very well want to learn more about the past—are rarely accommodated.

Despite these struggles, the remarkable diversity of pre-Columbian America is beginning to emerge. Some Indians were noble, others ignoble; some were generous, others greedy; some ate buffalo meat, others had a taste for human flesh. Covering this up is the surest way to deny American Indians their humanity. It turns them into nothing more than totems of identity politics. **NR**

■ **SPORTS** ■

Knight Falls

Foul play at Indiana University

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

WHEN, in early September, Indiana University president Myles Brand fired basketball coach Bobby Knight, pundit reactions ran the gamut from *Good riddance!* to *It's about time!* The *Chicago Sun-Times* wailed over "the shame he brought to Indiana University." Geraldo Rivera insisted Knight had "robbed college ball of its last vestige of innocence." The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was more sweeping: "Bobby Knight is gone because he despises every aspect of humanity save himself."

The remorseless unanimity of the reaction had nothing to do with basketball. Knight may be the greatest college-basketball coach of all time. When he took the reins at Army at age 24, he became the youngest big-time hoops coach ever. Over 29 years at Indiana, he amassed three national championships, eleven Big Ten championships, and 763 victories; still in his 50s, Knight was closing in on North Carolina coach Dean Smith's record of 879, at the rate of two dozen wins a year. Over the 1974–75 and 1975–76 seasons, his teams had a combined record of 63–1. He coached the U.S. Olympic team to a gold in 1984.

Bobby Knight's problem was not his coaching but his temper. His Army years rubbed off on him, and he ran his teams more like a boot camp than a basketball program—with intensity (and precision). In 1979, he was arrested and convicted in Puerto Rico for punching a cop. In 1981, during the NCAA Final Four in Philadelphia, he grabbed a taunting LSU fan and stuffed him into a

Mr. Caldwell is senior writer at *The Weekly Standard*.

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garbage can. In 1994, he accidentally head-butted one of his players, Sherron Wilkerson, during an intense off-court exchange. During a practice in 1997 he grabbed one of his players, Neil Reed, by the throat. When Knight shoved assistant coach Ron Felling during a tirade last December, Felling (allegedly) released a videotape of the 1997 incident, and the university trustees launched an investigation.

Knight came close to getting fired then, but Brand gave him a "second chance." Knight was fined $30,000 and ignominiously agreed to a "zero tolerance" policy. Any more incidents—in particular, any "inappropriate physical contact with players, members of the university community or others"—and Knight would be out.

On September 7, Kent Harvey, 19-year-old stepson of Mark Shaw, the talk-show host who has been Knight's greatest tormenter for the past half-decade, saw Knight in Assembly Hall and shouted, "Hey, Knight! What's up?" Knight grabbed the boy by the arm and told him not to address adults that way. On this much all are agreed. But Harvey, with his two fellow-triplet brothers and two friends to back him up, demanded an apology. Shaw called ESPN. Christopher Simpson, IU spokesman and Brand's *âme damnée*, called it an "extraordinarily serious" incident. Other witnesses disputed that account; campus police investigated and found "the interest of justice would not be served by any further action." Under the terms of "zero tolerance," however, that didn't matter: Knight was offered the option of resigning; when he refused, Brand fired him.

Then Knight's persecutors all lined up to say how "disappointed" they were and what a "sad" day it was for IU. They sure didn't look sad. Brand traveled from IU's Bloomington campus to the more camera-rich environment of Indianapolis to announce the firing. There he described the decision as "the most difficult decision I've ever had to make"—before maundering on about how "moral" and "ethical" that decision was, in a way that made it seem not difficult at all. On national TV, Kent Harvey was grinning ear-to-ear, and Mark Shaw could not keep from gloating: "The guy blew it. It's no longer going to be Bob Knight University. That's over." As for allegations that his sons had set Knight up, a confused Shaw replied: "Does he really think that out of 37,000 kids, mine is going to wander in front of him?" (Em . . . no—no one does; that's why people think Knight was sandbagged.)

Why was this necessary? Michael Perry, head coach at Georgia State University, said of Knight: "He's a tremendous motivator of young men. And we all want to be able to motivate men." Knight's style of motivating men, however commonplace it may have been 30 years ago, is an unusual one at the turn of the millennium—but if you didn't like it, there were 3,000 other colleges with basketball programs across the country. Mark Vershaw, for instance, who reached the Final Four with the Wisconsin Badgers last spring, didn't like it. Four years ago, he had narrowed his choices to Indiana and Wisconsin. After attending practices with both teams, he chose the latter. When Knight asked him why he didn't pick IU, Vershaw replied, "You, sir."

Though Knight's motivational style wasn't for everyone, it worked for those who chose it. Knight, one of the last coaches to hold a full professorship (in health) at his school, graduated 77 percent of his players. The NCAA average is 47 percent, and at competitive basketball schools, it's a fraction of that. What's more, Knight did this without cutting ethical corners, in one of the most corrupt walks of life in America. You could come to Indiana and play for the Coach—or not. But there would be no money slipped to an uncle, no sports car bought for you by an Alumni Club "friend," no steering you towards courses in which you'd get an automatic pass. His graduates include doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. Sherron Wilkerson, who was on the receiving end of the 1994 head-butt, now says: "I thank God for every day that I went through [Knight's coaching]." This success in raising *men* was the reason Knight expected IU to cut him some slack. "If my kids left," he said years ago, "and they weren't successful, and they didn't have degrees, and they were on the breadline or they were selling drugs or they were in jail for one thing or anoth-

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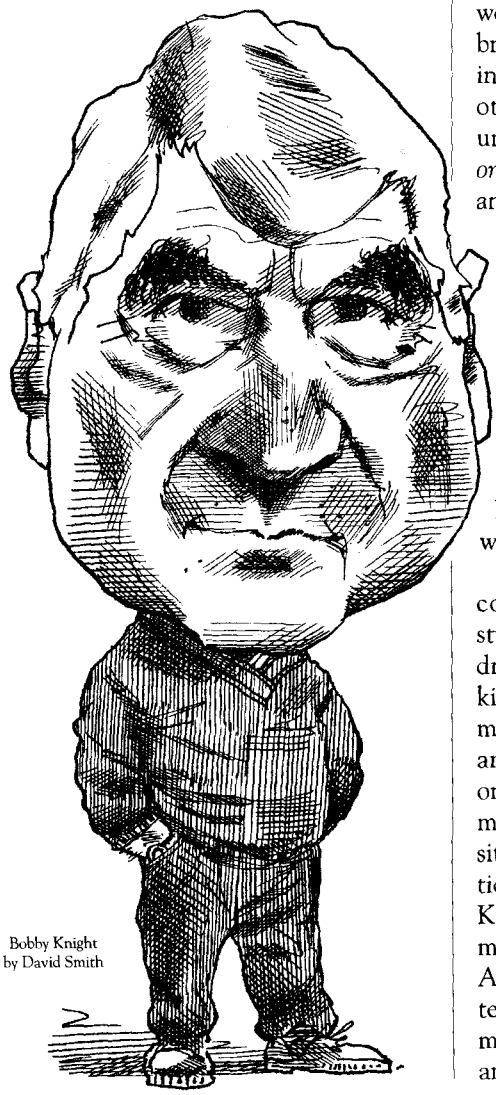
er, then I'd really have a lot of questions about just what the hell my methods were all leading to."

Knight always had a blind spot for the political side of things. When John Feinstein published *A Season on the Brink*, his account of a season spent with Knight and the Hoosiers, Knight protested that he'd thought everything would be off-the-record. (What did he think Feinstein was wasting a year of his life for?)

Similarly, he had no clue what a politically correct world he was living in, and he failed to understand the motivations of a man like Myles Brand, whose biggest initiative before arriving at Indiana had been an attempt to force down the throats of unwilling faculty a multicultural-studies requirement at the University of Oregon. Zero tolerance didn't mean zero tolerance: Brand himself realized how ridiculous it would look to fire a man for holding a kid's arm while giving him a lecture on manners. So he piled on a number of other "offenses" that Knight had committed in the 17 weeks since the ultimatum, the most important of which were, first, shouting at an IU attorney, Dorothy Frapwell, who had come to discuss the Felling lawsuit. (Simpson: "[He] became enraged. He was profane. He was rude. And he was intimidating." Funny how, in Brand's world, a woman in the workplace can do anything a man can except engage in a passionate argument.) And, second, the "gross insubordination" of leaving for a fishing trip rather than wait around to be lectured by Brand.



Bobby Knight
by David Smith

Knight's son Pat, an assistant coach, urged his father to quit once the zero-tolerance policy was announced. Pat understood what "zero tolerance" meant: zero accountability for the university brass. More and more of American life works like this. Zero tolerance was a way of creating a disciplinary machine that would run of itself, and spare a cowardly brass the responsibility of doing the firing—which was inevitable. Brand and others on the IU Board of Trustees understood that Knight couldn't—*no one could*—renounce the right to get angry without renouncing his humanity.

So zero tolerance was a way of getting rid of Bobby Knight without anyone's having to stand up to him like a man, or accord him status as a human being. Brand, Simpson, and others were right: Knight's understanding of people was blinkered. But it was in no way more blinkered than in his inability to comprehend that a university he'd served so loyally for 29 years would think of treating him as it did.

It was sneaky, it was wimpy, and it was counterproductive. Bobby Knight's style of raising men has worked for hundreds of them, and has rescued more kids from ghettoes than Myles Brand's multiculturalism ever will. But Brand and his fellow multiculturalists claim omniscience in the matter of socializing males. Their guiding principle is "diversity," yet they see no room in this gigantic country of ours for a single Bobby Knight, basketball genius though he may be. It's a mistake to think that America produces good men and good teachers in such profusion that one can make do with only the conformists among them. **NR**

■ CULTURE WATCH ■

First Amendment First

Why Hollywood should be left alone

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

On September 9, we had our annual block party in my suburban, lower-middle-class street. The event's centerpiece was a talent show, the brainchild of our 10-year-old neighbor Siobhan. She herself performed three songs: "It Was Our Day," from the group B*Witched, and the Britney Spears numbers "What U See (Is What U Get)" and "Lucky."

For readers not *au courant* with the pop-music scene, the first of these songs is a mawkish elegy for a dead friend: "Heaven, heaven was calling you/ Heaven, heaven needed you . . . I'll lay a rose beside you for ever . . ." The second is a girl's protest against her boyfriend's possessiveness: "I know you watch me when I'm dancin'/When I party with me friends/I can feel your eyes on my back, baby/I can't have no chains around me . . ." The third is about the inner loneliness of a Hollywood star: "She's so lucky, she's a star/But she cry, cry, cries in her lonely heart . . ."

So there I was, sitting on a plastic chair on my neighbor's lawn, watching a 10-year-old girl singing about grief, sexual jealousy, and the hollowness of success. As I squirmed, I sank into reflections of the curmudgeonly kind: Is this all kids know nowadays? There used to be *innocent* songs that preteens could sing—I can remember a hundred of them: "Green Grow the Rushes-O" and so on. Now there are no topics, for anyone of any age, but sex and death.

Miss Spears had been in the newspa-

Mr. Derbyshire is a contributing editor of National Review.

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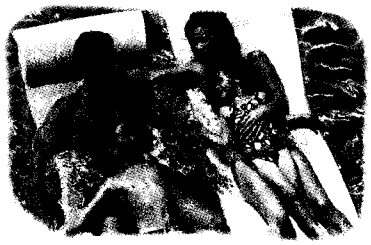

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pers that very morning; at the MTV Music Video Awards two nights before, 18-year-old Britney had taken off everything but a few strategic spangles and performed the kind of dance for which lonely men in soiled raincoats used to pay extravagant door charges to ill-lit basement clubs. If I were to tell you that I switched the thing off in disgust I should be guilty of a falsehood; but I am awfully glad my daughter Nellie (a 7-year-old whose contribution to the talent show was a *faultless* performance of Dvorak's "Humoresque" on violin) didn't see it. Yet even she already knows some Britney lyrics. They all do, preteens and pre-preteens. As parents say with a sigh, when you bring this up: *It's the culture.*

The culture came up often over the next few days. The following Monday the FTC released its report on the marketing of violence in the media. Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce Committee was holding hearings on the issue. Lynne Cheney showed up to urge show business to police itself, and to quote some lyrics from hip-hop star Eminem, who had won a major award at the MTV bash. One of Eminem's songs expresses the satisfaction a man feels at having raped and murdered his mother. Joe Lieberman went further before the committee, urging the FTC to step in and regulate media companies who would not tone down their products. Al Gore, on his way from one showbiz fund-raiser ($800,000) to another ($6.5 million), agreed.

What to make of all this? So far as public policy is concerned, there are three possible positions, identified here by those who take them.

My neighbors: It doesn't matter much, so there's no point getting steamed. As an influence on the development of my children, *my* words and *my* example outweigh by a factor of hundreds anything Britney Spears does.

Mrs. Cheney: The media companies that promote creatures like Eminem should be shamed before the public, and thereby persuaded to mend their ways.

Gore-Lieberman and their trial-lawyer pals: Legislate, regulate, intimidate. Sure, there'll be some grumbling from Hollywood; but they will never defect to the party of the dreaded "Christian Right."

Most conservatives would sympathize with Mrs. Cheney; I greatly admire her myself. If, however, my neighbors are representative of the larger American public, as they probably are, then her program is a non-starter. We must therefore choose between the first of the above options and the third. Can there be any doubt which poses the greater threat to our ancient liberties?

■

There is a price to be paid for liberty, and Eminem and Britney Spears are the current coin in which that price must be paid.

■

What we are talking about here, remember, is sex and violence. The second of these gives me no trouble. I have never had much patience with the idea that children should be shielded from fictional violence. I would much rather my own children discover *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as I did, in the thrilling sado-necrophiliac original, shot through with cruelty and lust, than via the lame jollity of the Disney version. Here I can appeal to the wisdom of great storytellers from the past, who spared children very little. Check out the original "Cinderella," in which the ugly sisters get their eyes pecked out. Children take this stuff in their stride. They may even, as Bruno Bettelheim argued, be helped by it. Certainly the evidence that exposure to graphic violence causes violent deeds is highly suspect: "Shooting the Messenger," a recent report by the Media Coalition (available on their website), persuasively refutes the kiddie-see, kiddie-do arguments.

Sex is more worrisome. As the doting father of little Nellie, I naturally spend a lot of time fretting about this. How will the vulgarity of our public entertainment shape her personality?

Our September 9 block party came on the anniversary of Elvis Presley's first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* 44 years ago. The following January, Sullivan had Elvis on for the third time; it was then that he issued his famous order for the singer to be shown only from the waist up, in order that younger viewers might not be inflamed by the sight of his hip movements. We have traveled an awfully long way from Ed Sullivan to the MTV awards show. What is really surprising, though, is how little harm has been done. It needs some effort of imagination now to recall the alarm that Elvis raised at that time. Frank Sinatra called Elvis's music "the most brutal, ugly, desperate, vicious form of expression it has been my misfortune to hear." This comment reflected a widespread public attitude.

If, in 1956, you had asked any thoughtful American what consequences might follow from the abandonment of all customary restraint in entertainment, and from related phenomena like the attempted normalization of homosexuality, he would probably have said that the Republic could not survive such a transformation. Plainly these good people believed something that was, in fact, untrue: that the stability of society depended on the exclusion, by common consent, of certain things from the sphere of public display.

The insouciance of my neighbors in the face of today's popular culture is, therefore, quite sensible. *It's the culture*—but it doesn't matter; it does no great harm.

To be sure, much mayhem has passed before our eyes since 1956. We have gone through Francis Fukuyama's "great disruption" with all its attendant phenomena: soaring rates of crime, bastardy, divorce, and so on. But we have come through to the other side at last; as Fukuyama himself points out, the indicators are trending downwards now, toward "re-normalization." And in all that happened, which was cause and which effect? Did Elvis—or Madonna, or Howard Stern—have one-thousandth the influence on our culture that (say) the Pill had?

The world changes. As a conservative, I shall conserve what I can; but if I am to keep any influence over my children at all, some measured degree of acceptance is called for. There is a price to be paid for liberty, and Eminem and Britney Spears are the current coin in which that price must be paid. They will not be shamed, and they ought not be banned: for if the guardians of our public virtue can outlaw hip-hop lyrics, you can be sure that "hate speech" will be their next target, and it is all too easy to imagine where that will lead. With the Second Amendment swirling down the drain, the survival of the First can no longer be taken for granted. **NR**

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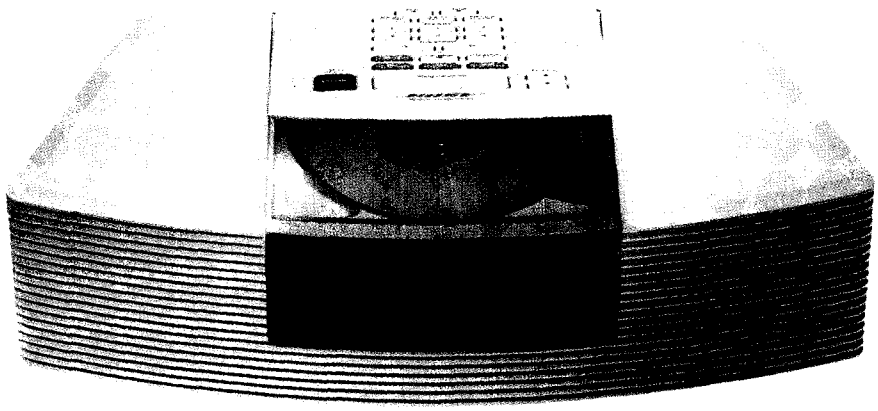

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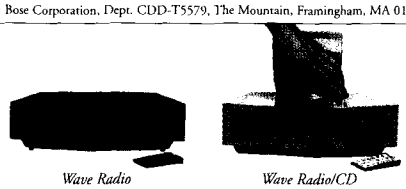

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■ ESSAY ■

'Corruption, Plunder, and Waste'

The ethical case against big government

MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

THE length of our election cycle gives Americans the unenviable luxury of exhausting every conceivable precedent in analyzing a presidential campaign. Commentators have already looked at the election of 2000 through a dizzying variety of historical prisms. Some have pointed out similarities to the election of 1896, when McKinley bested Bryan; others have looked at it from the vantage point of Bush *père*'s campaign against Dukakis in 1988, JFK's 1960 campaign, even Martin Van Buren's 1836 race. And yet it may be that the most powerful historical precedent upon which George W. Bush can draw in the closing weeks of his campaign is one of the Republic's oldest: He can use a polemical weapon that men like Thomas Jefferson brought to perfection more than two centuries ago.

Bush needs to make a twofold case in the final days of the campaign: first, that those who are currently wielding executive power in Washington have been corrupted by it, and second, that their moral shortcomings—now being dismissed by many as scarcely relevant character flaws—will end up confronting Americans with a costly pocketbook issue down the road. By revising the language of Jefferson and applying it to America today, Bush can accomplish what was always going to be a difficult task: demonstrating that the character issue has practical consequences. So far, Bush hasn't found a convincing way to demonstrate that his moral critique of the Clinton-Gore years is of a piece with his economic critique. Jefferson can help him explain why the two messages can't be separated—especially where taxes are concerned.

Part of the reason Bush's tax-cut talk has faltered in recent weeks is that he has allowed people to focus on the glory of the "cut" and not on the evils of the "tax." In a prosperous time many of those with superfluous cash on hand will be indifferent to the appeal of the cut, may even pique themselves a little on their ability to resist its temptation. By updating the 18th-century maxim that moral degeneracy in politics is ultimately reflected in misguided fiscal policy, Bush can refocus people's eyes on the problem of excessive taxation itself, and show why a failing of political character—what the Founders called corruption—matters when it comes to the tax code.

Mr. Beran is the author of *The Last Patrician: Bobby Kennedy and the End of American Aristocracy.*

PLACES AND PENSIONS

The patriots who made the American Revolution believed that the ministerial factions that dominated 18th-century Westminster amounted to a "court party," one that governed at the expense of Britain and her colonies as a whole. Crown ministers like Walpole, Townshend, and North had grown lazy and fat, their opponents argued, through oppressive tax policies, and they had conspired against the public good by subsidizing "placemen"—timeservers and bureaucrats—who in return gave the ministers crucial political support. Lord Bolingbroke, an opposition leader, argued that policies implemented after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had enabled ministers to create a "fund for corruption," one that allowed ministerial apparatchiks—known as "jobbers"—to distribute "places and pensions" in exchange for votes. The taxes that subsidized these sinecures in turn worked "to impoverish the people; to render them as submissive and as abject as the subjects, the boors, or the slaves, in some foreign countries, and to beggar them out of their sturdiness."

American patriots adopted these arguments when they themselves came to protest British tax policy in the 1760s and 1770s. Like Bolingbroke, the Americans viewed the crown ministers and their agents as "little merchants of human flesh," reprobates who stole "from the public to replenish the royal coffers, to glut the ministers, to feed some of their hungry creatures, and to bribe a parliament besides." After the Revolution, Americans, particularly Democrats, continued to be suspicious of the corrupting effects of executive power: Think of Jefferson's attacks on the Federalists, for example, or Jackson's attacks on the Whigs. More recently, however, Republicans have used the rhetoric of corruption and court-party malversation to greatest effect: Think of Reagan's crusade against big government in 1980. Bureaucrats and teachers' unions, in the Republican view, have become the modern equivalent of 18th-century placemen; in exchange for tax dollars, pensions, and—in the case of teachers' unions—a monopoly on public education, the new placemen reliably deliver Democratic votes on election day.

The rhetoric of court-party corruption has its dangers, especially where it tempts those who use it to believe in the possibility of a Republic of Virtue, and to exaggerate the beneficence of a government decently ordered and properly cleansed. But the rhetoric has this strength: It enables a can-

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didate to combine moral outrage against corruption (scandals and bribes) with economic outrage against the irresponsible patterns of taxation to which corruption so often leads. The current administration has shrunk from meaningful tax relief in part because it fears deficits, but in part, too, because an embrace of such relief would send the wrong message to legions of placemen. Such relief would signal the faithful that the president and vice president were no longer committed to a policy of diverting ever-larger sums of public money towards public-sector parasites. And so the administration remains committed to the policy. The Founders would have considered this willingness to use public revenue to further partisan ends a prima facie example of executive corruption.

■

Part of the courtier's problem, in the eyes of Americans bred up to resent the dazzle of a court party, is that his words are morally bankrupt.

■

It is true, of course, that wherever there is politics there is pork. Every party strives to reward its friends. But there is this difference between Republicans and Democrats: The GOP knows that the practice of pork-barrel politics is a vicious one, and tries to control the damage by limiting the amount of money Washington has to misspend. The Democratic leadership, however, insists that the vice is really a virtue. This lack of self-knowledge, or failure of contrition, is the principal cause of Democratic overreaching, the canker to its rose. When Thomas Jefferson said that he hoped that "our general government" could "be reduced to a very simple organization, and a very inexpensive one; a few plain duties to be performed by a few servants," he did so because he knew that a larger establishment, governed in the manner of a European court, would inevitably "invite the public agents to corruption, plunder and waste." Jefferson's successors in the Democratic party are less conscious of their duty to restrain the government's insatiable appetites. Al Gore shows no sign of wishing to enlighten them.

THE BOOK OF THE COURTIER

Have you ever noticed the neat little bows the vice president makes when he acknowledges the cheers of the crowd? Al Gore is a courtier. Richard Nixon would envy his ease in a Georgetown salon; Castiglione himself might be impressed. Gore, like many of those who have spent their lives in the anterooms and audience chambers of a court, is reported to be an easy and graceful figure in private life. A correspondent for one of the Paris dailies told me of the relaxed and natural way in which the vice president discussed wines with him aboard Air Force Two; the reporter regretted that Gore's staff demanded the conversation be kept off the record. Gore appears stiff and awkward only in public settings—on the hustings—where his polished manners do not help him. But he doubtless got on superbly with his former patron, Armand Hammer, another connoisseur of court life, a charmer, *très serviable*, one of those professional equerries who was equally at home with the great figures of Washington, London, and Moscow. The vice president serves his current master with the same *politesse* with which he flattered (and was flattered by) Hammer: "One of our greatest presidents" is the tribute of a courtier to his king. Gore's verbal agility is that of a man who has spent much of his life in the corridors of power; his urbane and nonchalant attitude towards the truth has aroused skepticism even among journalists familiar with the philosophical sophistication of the graduate schools, where students learn that there are no facts, only interpretations.

"A man of parts and knowledge, who acquires the easy and noble manners of a court, is the most perfect" of beings. So 18th-century Lord Chesterfield declared in a letter to his son. Dr. Johnson gave a different estimate of the courtly ideal Chesterfield celebrated: The diplomat's letters, he said, taught "the morals of a whore" and "the manners of a dancing master." When Charles Dickens came to sketch milord's character in *Barnaby Rudge*—Chesterfield goes by the name of Mr. Chester in that novel—he had plain old Mr. Haredale confront the courtier in words that George Bush would do well to remember in his face-offs with the vice president:

> I have come here at your desire, holding myself bound to meet you, when and where you would. I have not come to bandy pleasant speeches, or hollow professions. You are a smooth man of the world, sir, and at such play have me at a disadvantage. The very last man on this earth with whom I would enter the lists to combat with gentle compliments and masked faces, is Mr. Chester, I do assure you. I am not his match at such weapons, and have reason to believe that few men are.

Part of the courtier's problem, in the eyes of Americans bred up to resent the dazzle of a court party, is that his words are morally bankrupt. His language is too artful ("no controlling legal authority") when it is not manifestly false (inventing the Internet). A preference for plain speaking runs deep in the American character. Mark Twain makes us laugh at the pretentious language of the pseudo Duke of Bridgewater in *Huckleberry Finn;* the reader of the novel learns to prefer the awkward and ungrammatical prose of Huck. "We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all," Huck says. "Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't." Bush, whose conversation is closer to Huck's than it is, say, to Adlai Stevenson's, provokes sneers among the reporters; but in some parts of the country his language—hardly less clumsy than Huckleberry's—may seem merely honest.

The courtier's deeper problem, according to Jefferson, is that power has corrupted his judgment. Court life, Jefferson said, enervated the mind of his friend John Adams. "Mr. Adams had originally been a republican," Jefferson wrote, "but the glare of royalty and nobility, during his mission to England," blinded him. By resurrecting Jefferson's critique of court-driven corruption, Bush may yet find a way to show how the deals and decisions his opponent has made to stay in power have left him incapable of taking on the status quo in Washington. The problem goes deeper than the scandals and fundraising improprieties that are synonymous with the administration in which the vice president serves. It goes

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beyond the administration's bully-boy tactics, its use of Joel Klein's Antitrust Division and Andrew Cuomo's Department of Housing and Urban Development in ways that represent a reversion to pre-Watergate standards of executive conduct. The cancer has eaten away at Gore's policymaking fiber. The president and vice president strive to reward their placemen (the teachers' unions, the trial lawyers, the Hollywood characters who serve as the *jongleurs* of Clinton's court) even as they go beyond their predecessors and opponents with proposals to turn the tax code into a compilation of poll-driven tax credits aimed at swing voters. Such targeted cuts do nothing to relieve the overall tax burden, a burden which has only grown heavier during the Clinton-Gore years.

By challenging the vice president on what economist Robert Samuelson has called the demagoguery of his prescription-drug plan, by emphasizing the vice president's cynical refusal to work for either entitlement reform or school reform—two of today's more pressing challenges—Bush may yet succeed in painting a credible picture of a politician too deeply enmeshed in the tangled fibers of federal largesse to effect the changes America needs. Not only is Gore unwilling to try to fix problems that must inevitably drag the country down ten or twenty years from now if they remain unsolved (e.g., Social Security); in the interest of maintaining power, the vice president proposes the creation of new entitlements that will ineluctably commit the nation to economically harmful levels of taxation in the years to come.

Time is running out. Bush must move quickly to explain to Americans why the rot in the capital is likely to prove costly to them in the future. **NR**

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Free Association

The incoherence of antidiscrimination laws

RICHARD A. EPSTEIN

LAST term's sleeper Supreme Court case was *Boy Scouts of America* v. *Dale*, in which the plaintiff sued the Boy Scouts for denying him a scoutmaster position solely because he was gay. New Jersey's antidiscrimination law had recently been broadened to include discrimination based on "affectional or sexual orientation." James Dale won handily in the New Jersey supreme court, which refused to shoehorn the sprawling Boy Scout organization into a narrow statutory exception for clubs or other "distinctively private" organizations. The court recognized that expressive organizations enjoy First Amendment protection for their freedom of association—but ruled that the Boy Scouts weren't such an organization.

The case forced the U.S. Supreme Court to choose between two of its favorite causes—freedom of speech and freedom from discrimination. Most observers thought that the Scouts would lose. But the Court's five-member conservative wing flexed its activist muscles, by holding that the Scouts' First Amendment right to expressive association trumped the antidiscrimination law. It didn't matter that the Scouts' policy statements had hemmed and hawed about letting gays be scoutmasters; Justice Rehnquist said the Scouts did not have to "trumpet" their antigay position "from the housetops" to preserve their First Amendment rights. Justice Stevens's dissent found the Scouts' equivocation fatal to the First Amendment claim, because antigay propaganda was no part of the organization's fundamental mission. The Ku Klux Klan, it seems, can exclude blacks and Jews, because it hates them; the Scouts cannot exclude gays just because it disapproves of their behavior.

The key question is: How does the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech support the claim for freedom of association? During the 1950s civil-rights struggle in the South, the Court had no trouble figuring out the connection. People who want to speak must work collectively to be effective. To tax or regulate the associations that sponsor speech is to tax and regulate the speech itself. Thus Alabama could not force the NAACP to turn over its membership list to the state, given the evident risk of retaliation. Nor could the local NAACP be forced to admit any hostile outsider to spy on its operations. After all, the right to associate carries with it the right *not* to associate. The organization is the judge of its membership—period.

Freedom of association is thus a derivative right of freedom

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of speech. But what happens when the organization concerned is not the NAACP, but the Minnesota Jaycees—a nondescript operation that wanted to offer, exclusively to men, an opportunity for personal growth and community involvement? In 1984, the Court upheld application of Minnesota's ill-named Human Rights Act, which prohibited private organizations from discriminating on the grounds of sex. Justice Brennan, a wary veteran of the earlier civil-rights struggles, forthrightly conceded that the Jaycees' First Amendment right of association was infringed, but said that that interest had to yield to the state's "compelling" interest in eradicating discrimination against women. He concluded that women (who were already allowed associate membership in the Jaycees) could participate in its mission of promoting the well-being of men. But this is too slick. Suppose that the lady Jaycees wanted to exclude men from their membership. Who decides whether their reason is good or bad? Whether men get associate membership? Can a human-rights commission bless women-only organizations, while frowning on men-only organizations?

The state should not be allowed to put its thumb on the scales. Freedom—of speech, association, and contract—carries with it the idea that the right to exclude or include can be exercised for private reasons that need *no validation by any public body*. An opponent's duty is not to remain silent, but to keep out. Yet the antidiscrimination laws give private critics not only a public forum to vent, but a public hammer with which to beat the groups they oppose.

How are we to decide when the right to exclude should be honored or breached? Alas, there's now a complicated twofold process that gives judicial (and legislative) activism a bad name. First, we are told that all *organizations* are not equal. Intimate personal associations rank highest on the list, so that no human-rights bureaucrat will force a Roman Catholic to marry a Jew who "otherwise qualifies" as a spouse. At the other extreme are those large impersonal business corporations whose associational rights are deemed weak. In between are the countless—and hitherto voluntary—associations with political, artistic, social, athletic, and religious concerns. Second, all *interests* are not equal. There is a list of forbidden grounds for discrimination—age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, handicap, sexual orientation, etc.—but some are more important than others. (Race, for example, is more important than disability.)

Courts must keep both of these continuums in mind simultaneously, and this renders it virtually impossible for them to articulate hard and fast constitutional distinctions. The one feeble tool that organizes their analysis is the distinction between "expressive" and "nonexpressive" organizations. The former covers the Boy Scouts, but not the Jaycees or General Motors.

But the distinction is inadequate. *All* associations become

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expressive once they have two or more members. Justice Stevens's misguided insistence that only highly focused and—frequently—extremist organizations get First Amendment protection has the ostensible virtue of giving the right to exclude to the parties likely to value it most. But it comes at the far greater cost of skewing the public debate by giving nut cases an associational freedom denied to more diffuse, but rational and temperate, groups. Encouraging centrist organizations helps create an environment that fosters, not disrupts, social consensus.

The law would be better off not trying to draw any line at all between expressive and nonexpressive associations. It should hew to the simpler line that freedom of speech protects the rights of association for *all* voluntary groups. The key insight is that private self-selection allows every voluntary organization to give voice to its own membership. If more women flock to women-only organizations, so be it. If more groups practice affirmative action, that's fine as well. All organizations can be masters of their own fate.

Norman Rockwell

That's the true meaning of *Dale*, once we liberate it from Chief Justice Rehnquist's excessively narrow application to "expressive organizations." Rightly understood, *Dale* forces us to confront the multiple forms of forced private association that have been staples of the New Deal and the Great Society. For starters, ask whether Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act—which prohibits private employers from discriminating against employees because of race, creed, and sex—can survive constitutional challenge under the First Amendment. If these firms all have their expressive components, then why can the state force them to hire people whom they wish to exclude? Follow *Dale*, and it is flatly unconstitutional for the U.S. to force any private organization to adopt a color-blind or sex-blind policy in hiring or admission to membership. One university can go all-out for affirmative action; an all-girls school can hire only female teachers; a religious school can admit only co-religionists. But in the midst of this diversity, all face one common risk for eccentric beliefs: They have to attract both faculty and students.

It will be objected that surely the First Amendment was not intended to have such long tentacles. But in fact, other constitutional provisions support this approach. Turn, for example, to private property, regarded by the Founders as the guardian of every other right. The Fifth Amendment states simply that private property shall not be taken for public use, without just compensation. On any reading, private property entails the right to exclude others from one's premises, so the state cannot force apartment-house owners to let cable operators install junction boxes on their roofs for free, or force owners of private marinas connected to public waters to admit all boats. Property and speech also work together to promote associational freedoms. What sense is there in saying that the Boy Scouts could exclude gays from membership if they were forced to admit them to Scout headquarters?

But what of Justice Brennan's claim that neither property rights nor speech rights are absolute? His general conception was right, but the application incorrect. The English common law long held that common carriers, for example, were "affected with the public interest" and thus had to serve all comers on reasonable and nondiscriminatory terms. It was, and is, too dangerous to confer an absolute right to exclude on any monopolist who is part of a complex communication or transportation network. But people who are offended by the Boy Scouts or the Jaycees can go elsewhere. Vigorous competition keeps these organizations in line, so there is no public reason to second-guess their policies. It's different when an airline or phone carrier refuses to serve a customer. The phone company is in the carriage, not the content business; and the airline does not assign seats by political affiliation or moral belief. The nature of these services is standardized and impersonal, so that the rights infringed count for little compared to the major threat that's neutralized—so little, in fact, that one could drop the nondiscrimination rule without altering behavior in the slightest.

This concern about monopoly power applies to both private and public organizations, which explains why the state, given its monopoly of force, has to serve all persons equally. But the principle of equal justice under the rule of law is consistent with allowing private groups strong associational freedoms. It is foolhardy, then, to think we can distinguish speech rights from economic rights. Accordingly, we should show renewed respect to the oft-repudiated pre-New Deal regime that afforded stronger constitutional protection to economic liberties. The Constitution offers strong protection to associational rights without trying to distinguish between the economic and social domains. In *Dale*, the Supreme Court has taken one short but welcome step down this path—by blunting a frontal attack on associational freedoms.

Much work remains. The *New York Times* first reported that several cities had denied the Scouts the right to use public parks because of their policy towards gays. That report overstated the local reaction, but it does raise the question of whether local communities could bar the Boy Scouts from use of public facilities because of their discriminatory policies. Sorry, but all forms of state retaliation are out of line. The parks have to be open to the Scouts, and so too do the public streets. Freedom of association insulates all groups from arbitrary state burdens used to coerce people into abandoning their constitutional rights. The *Times* (which depends on freedom of speech for its intellectual independence) is free to castigate the Boy Scouts, but it showed a serious lapse in editorial judgment in urging state and local governments to exclude Scouts from public facilities. Justice Holmes said long ago that the best test of truth in ideas is competition in the marketplace. The Scouts must be sheltered from government counterattacks—but not from the criticisms of outsiders, the loss of private contributions, and discontent among their members. To those risks, everyone is—and should be—vulnerable, in a free society. **NR**

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The Left's Prison Complex

The case against the case against jail

ELI LEHRER

THE Left knows a growth industry when it sees one. Ever since prominent left-wing journalist Mike Davis popularized the term "prison industrial complex" in a 1995 *Nation* article, self-styled progressives have relentlessly derided America's burgeoning prison system as a racist, profit-driven monster that enriches corporations and wastes tax dollars while doing little to reduce crime.

The Left's attack on the prison system is wrong in every major respect. America's prison system doesn't discriminate against blacks, is not growing because of a search for profits, and has made America much safer than other countries. For the Left, attacking the prison system is little more than an excuse to recycle tired anticapitalist canards.

Little evidence exists that black criminals face discrimination in the criminal-justice system. Black "overrepresentation" in that system is in the number of criminals arrested. Racist cops aren't responsible for this disparity: Blacks get arrested at the same high rates in cities like Atlanta and Washington where the political establishment is almost entirely African-American and the police forces reflect the population's ethnic makeup. In a study on sentencing disparity commissioned by the Center for Equal Opportunity, former University of Maryland professor Robert Lerner finds that *arrested blacks get sent to prison at a lower rate than arrested whites in just about every category that the government measures*. Lerner found that blacks were twice as likely to get off on rape charges, around 50 percent more likely to escape punishment when charged with simple assault, and a third more likely to beat the rap on drug dealing. The difference in favor of black offenders existed in 12 out of 14 categories of crime. (The exceptions were traffic felonies and a small category of miscellaneous offenses.)

Black murderers face shorter sentences than their white counterparts and (contrary to leftist dogma) make fewer trips to death row. Even when it comes to the federal law punishing crack possession much more harshly than powder-cocaine possession—a favorite topic of Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton—racism doesn't enter the picture. In his 1997 book *Race, Crime and the Law,* Harvard Law School professor Randall Kennedy shows that the law passed with the enthusiastic support of black congressmen who saw crack becoming the drug of choice in their districts. The use of methamphetamine and heroin—predominantly by whites—has soared in the 1990s, while the penalties for this use have remained stable. Would black Americans be better off if the situation were reversed, and crack dealing went on uninterrupted in American inner cities while police cracked down on rural whites using methamphetamine? If this happened, civil-rights leaders would organize protest marches in favor of stronger drug-enforcement efforts in inner cities—and would be right to do so.

Mr. Lehrer is a Bradley Fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY

The contention that the quest for profits has driven America's fourfold increase in prison capacity since 1980 is equally specious. Private-prison operators, a chief bugbear of the Left, incarcerate a measly 5 percent of America's convicts. Prisons contract out more services than they did 15 years ago, but so do nearly all other government agencies. The overwhelming majority of prison services remain in the hands of money-losing government bureaucracies. Unlike their military-industrial counterparts, which produce some of America's leading exports and sell civilian goods ranging from jetliners to computer hardware, major prison-related producers sell little outside of America's borders and almost nothing to private citizens. While a few states, California and Tennessee most prominently, do count corrections-industry groups among their most powerful lobbies, they remain exceptions. No sizeable cities have prison-reliant economies, and few people outside of declining farm towns actually want to live near prisons. Indeed, the presence of a large jail proved a major stumbling block in the effort to revitalize Chicago's South Loop.

It's not profits, but well-founded public outrage over criminals being set loose too soon that has driven America's gradual increase in length of prison sentences. In the early 1970s, as crime increased and prison sentences decreased, annual Gallup polls showed huge increases in Americans' fear of crime. The number of Americans telling pollsters that crime was a major political issue likewise increased sharply, as did public support for stiffer sentences.

Public sentiment was right. British researcher Donald E. Lewis's comprehensive examination of studies on the correlation between sentence length and crime rates (published in the *British Journal of Criminology*) concludes that doubling the length of the sentence for a crime will cut the likelihood that that crime will be committed by a little less than half. In a 1994 report on national sentencing policies published by the National Institute of Justice, Michael K. Block—a former member of the federal sentencing commission—found that violent criminals, on average, spent a little over three months in prison per reported crime, and even murderers were turned loose after serving an average of about five years. Sentences have increased a bit since 1994, but remain shockingly low. "There are too many criminals committing too many crimes," wrote Block. "We find ourselves [building more prisons] because for most of the last half of the 20th century, sentencing practices have not been harsh enough."

Locking up criminals for longer periods of time has proven one of America's most effective anticrime strategies. Honest liberals can't dispute James Q. Wilson's observation that "coincident with rising prison population there began in 1979–80 a steep reduction in the crime rate as reported by

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the victimization surveys." American property-crime rates peaked in 1974, fell slightly through most of the rest of the decade and then began a steep decline in the early 1980s. Violent-crime rates followed the same trendline, but rose for a few years in the late 1980s as crack swept inner cities, before dropping sharply in the 1990s. In 1973, nearly 60 percent of American households fell victim to property crimes. In 1999, fewer than 20 percent did. The same holds for violent crime: Had the 1999 crime rates been the same as those of 1990, America would have seen about 7,800 additional murders, 20,000 or so additional rapes, and nearly a quarter-million more armed attacks. Mapped against each other, America's rates of incarceration and overall crime form a neat X: As incarceration rates rose, crime fell.

Despite these facts, a widely cited 1997 report from the Sentencing Project, a left-leaning advocacy group, argued that America's high imprisonment rate has not reduced crime—because nations with lower incarceration rates are safer than the U.S. The study conveniently begins its analysis right before cheap, violence-inducing crack became widely available in America's cities, and ends it just as the epidemic began to wane. The crack epidemic drove up crime rates in the early years of the study, while the effects of improved policing and greater imprisonment didn't really take hold until after the period studied. Adding data from 1997, 1998, and 1999—years that saw some of the largest reductions in crime since the government started systematically tracking crime statistics in the 1920s—would have made the study's data into an argument for more incarceration.

Ed Kash/CORBIS

The Left lowers the bar

The bulk of the evidence shows that longer sentences really do work. And an honest look at the international data presents a good case for building prisons: A 1998 study from the British Home Office, their equivalent of the Justice Department, cited the U.S. as one of only two major Western countries to see their crime rates drop between the late 1980s and late 1990s. Canada, France, England, and Switzerland all have more crime per capita than the United States. A study commissioned by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics found that in 1998, Englishmen were twice as likely as Americans to have their cars stolen, about a third more likely to get mugged by an armed assailant, and nearly ten times more likely to have their home broken into while it was occupied. The study's authors suggest an explanation: "An offender's risk of being caught, convicted and incarcerated has been rising in the United States but falling in England."

Indeed, many of the other factors that social scientists believe may reduce crime in America are present in other countries that put fewer people in prison and have seen crime fall far more slowly. Canada and Britain have both seen comparable economic prosperity during the late 1990s. Canada's police departments have made the same switch toward community policing as America's, which was itself based on British methods. While a shrinking population of men between their mid teens and late twenties did help reduce America's crime rates, the nation's youth population has begun rising again—even as nearly all other industrialized countries have seen much greater drops in their youth populations, and small or nonexistent drops in crime. Indeed, high-poverty American cities like Garden Grove, Calif., and McAllen, Tex.—not coincidentally located in states that have invested heavily in prison infrastructure—have seen their crime rates drop sharply even though their high-school-aged populations have skyrocketed.

AN ATTACK ON CAPITALISM

America's prison system isn't perfect. "There's no intrinsic reason why conservatives should support [prisons]. They are big, they cost a lot of money, and they expand the role of the state," says Pat Nolan of the Justice Fellowship, the public-policy arm of Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship. "Take the DMV, string barbed wire, and give the clerks guns and you'll get the idea." Violence and brutality fill America's prisons: Between a quarter and a third of male prisoners get raped by their fellow inmates. Black- and white-nationalist gangs control many prisons and all too often have free rein to recruit new members.

For the Left, solving these problems is often beside the point; most leftists simply want to attack capitalism. "The companies that actually imprison people are only a small part of what's going on. We're talking about architects, food-service providers, companies that make software, the prison guards' unions," says Colorado journalist Joel Dyer, author of *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine: How America Profits from Crime*. "The real problem is the structure of our economy." Rising incarceration rates also provide an excuse for the Left to talk about many of its favorite issues. "You can use [America's imprisonment rate] to talk about class; you can deal with globalization and racism and poverty," says Daniel Burton-Rose of the Prison Activist Resource Center. "It lets you take on the entire system and educate people about why capitalism doesn't work." The situation in academia is little better. As the University of Delaware's Kenneth Haas, coeditor of the widely used anthology *The Dilemmas of Corrections*, correctly points out: "They've been writing articles for 20 years about the thesis that unemployment rates and imprisonment rates are linked. What you get is a lot of work done by quantitative sociologists who have an enormous leftward bias. They say nice things about each other to the National Science Foundation . . . and nothing changes."

The Left's attack on the prison system has little to do with its nominal target and a lot to do with loathing for capitalism. America's prison system could stand some improvement, but we should remember that people go to prison because they commit crimes, not because others want to make money. **NR**

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Beijing 2008

The Olympics in the belly of the beast

JAY NORDLINGER

HERE we go again: Beijing is trying to get the Olympic Games, for 2008. In the early '90s, they made an all-out effort to win the Games for 2000, losing out by a hair to Sydney. Now they are the clear front-runner; a decision is expected next summer. The Chinese insist aggressively that the 2008 Games are their due. So it is time to consider, once more, whether the Games—which are extremely important to much of the world—should be staged in a totalitarian capital.

Back in 1992 and '93, when the Chinese made their first attempt, Tiananmen Square was a fairly fresh memory. (That massacre took place in 1989.) The authorities needed a leg up with both the world and their own people. So they craved the Olympics even more desperately than they do today. In a breathtaking campaign, they earmarked billions of dollars for "Olympic construction." They offered to pay transportation and room-and-board for the many thousands of athletes and officials who would attend the Games. They initiated a public-hygiene crusade: "Mobilize the Masses to Create a Fly-Free City!" They enlisted the citizenry to scrub and festoon the capital. They held contests in speaking English and other foreign languages, with cold cash going to the winners. They forbade residents to burn coal (as most of them did for their basic needs): The sky had to be blue! Every day, it was put out more flags, brandish and recite more slogans.

And the deciders? They got the royal (Communist) treatment. Said one Beijing official, "We look upon the International Olympic Committee as God. Their wish is our command." The government ordered the air force to disperse the clouds over the capital, lest it rain on the Committee's grandees. They took the step of nominating Juan Antonio Samaranch, boss of the IOC, for the Nobel Peace Prize. They provided each member of the Committee with all manner of comforts, including a chauffeured black Mercedes. They pledged to build a monument on the Great Wall bearing the names of all ninety IOC members.

And, for a special treat, they stopped following foreign reporters—stopped putting tails on them, giving them a little more space. Nevertheless, there were human-rights objections here and there. The U.S. Congress adopted a resolution opposing the granting of the Olympics to Beijing; the European Parliament did the same. This hardly pleased the IOC. Samaranch grumbled that the United States was happy to trade with China but not to give them the Olympics. Another Committee official said—poetically if absurdly—"If we always picked a city wearing a halo, we wouldn't be celebrating our hundredth anniversary . . . "

The Chinese dissident community itself was split. Most were opposed to letting the regime have the Games, but a few prominent spokesmen were not. Wang Dan, a student leader in Tiananmen Square, was released in February 1993, about a half-year before the Committee's vote. Somewhat reluctantly, he favored giving the Games to Beijing, hoping that this plum would "accelerate China's opening to the rest of the world." Wei Jingsheng, another widely admired dissident, felt the same. He was released a grand total of nine days before the Committee voted, after being imprisoned for 14 and a half years. As a further sweetener, Beijing delayed the prosecution of about twenty other democracy activists—men and women who were pawns in the regime's Olympic game.

A HISTORY OF POLITICS

Today, Wei opposes Beijing 2008, for reasons that we will explore in a moment. (Wang Dan, who now, like Wei, lives in the United States, was unavailable for comment.) Wei brings up—as do many others—the specter of Berlin '36. These were, of course, the Hitler Games. The standard American view of these Games is that they blew up in Hitler's face thanks to the historic performance of the (black) U.S. track-and-field star Jesse Owens. This view is handed out to Americans in kindergarten along with crayons and construction paper. But it is untrue: The opportunity to host the Olympics was of great importance to Hitler and the furtherance of his regime, as scholars of the period uniformly acknowledge.

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It is time to consider, once more, whether the Games should be staged in a totalitarian capital.

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Berlin got the '36 Games in 1931, two years before the Nazis rose to power. Once Hitler was installed, however, a movement took shape to boycott the Games. In 1933, the American Olympic committees voted to stay away from Berlin if Hitler refused to allow Jewish athletes to participate on German teams. The regime found two token Jews, both of them living in exile, and this gesture satisfied the Americans. All hope of a boycott faded. Hitler also relaxed—just for a bit—his general persecution of the Jews, a period that become known as his "Olympic Pause."

In 1935, the American consul in Berlin, one George S. Messersmith, wrote the following to secretary of state Cordell Hull: "To the [Nazi] Party and to the youth of Germany, the holding of the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 has become the symbol of the conquest of the world by National Socialist doctrine. Should the Games not be held in Berlin, it would be one of the most serious blows which National Socialist prestige could suffer." As Duff Hart-Davis, author of *Hitler's Games*, relates, the Nazis ensured that Berlin was nicely and benignly turned out, creating the mirage that the Führer's Germany was "a perfectly normal place, in which life went on as pleasantly as in any other European country." Freedom-suppressing govern-

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ments—such as China's—become expert at erecting Potemkin villages. Hart-Davis further writes, "That the success of the eleventh Olympiad gave Hitler an enormous boost, both moral and political, nobody could deny." The journalist William Shirer recorded in 1984, "Hitler, we who covered the Games had to concede, turned the Olympics into a dazzling propaganda success for his barbarian regime."

■

Those of us who love the Olympics should choke on the idea of watching tyrants and butcherers preside smilingly over the Games.

■

Whether a boycott would have made a difference is a matter for speculation. Germany was banned from the 1948 Games, held in a London that still bore marks of the Blitz.

Political questions have never been divorced from the Games, and probably never will be. The chance to host the Olympics is panted after by many nations, for many reasons. By the end of 1972, the IOC had awarded the Games to all three of the major aggressor powers in World War II: Italy (1960), Japan (1964), and Germany (1972). This was a way of welcoming those countries back into the family of nations, and of rewarding them for taking the democratic road. For Cold War reasons—"balance" and all that—the Committee felt it necessary to give the Games to the USSR in 1980. But in December 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, and as former president Richard Nixon put it so memorably, "You can't just go over there and high-jump with them." China, for its part, has always been an Olympic problem. For years, the regime refused to participate in the Games if Taiwan were permitted to do so. As it stands now, Taiwan is allowed to compete, but only under the awkward name "Chinese Taipei."

One truly interesting case is that of the 1988 Games, held in Seoul. The fact of the Olympics there is often credited with hastening the democratization of that country. As Don Oberdorfer, former *Washington Post* reporter and a Korea expert, explains, "The dictatorship in Seoul, which had pledged free elections, faced huge protests in 1987," a year before the torch was to be lit. Strongman Chun Doo Hwan "considered calling out the military, but the prospect of the Olympics stayed his hand. President Reagan, too, sent a letter warning him not to do it, but the coming of the Olympics was the biggest factor." The rest, for South Korea, was smooth sailing out of authoritarianism. Oberdorfer is one who hopes that Beijing will get the Games for 2008, believing that this "would have a restraining effect" on that regime.

Chinese number one Jiang Zemin by Roman Genn

A LICENSE FOR STATE THUGGERY?

Wei Jingsheng thinks otherwise. In 1993, he notes, "I was used to enhance the Party's effort to get a high score on its application for 2000." And "there was a sudden improvement in human rights"—a Chinese "Olympic Pause." In those days, he favored the Games in Beijing because "I thought the Party would be able to hold on to power for a few more years in a very stable form, and I thought having the Games would promote the opening of people's minds." Yet the wheel has turned. "The regime is relatively unstable, and by 2008 it might be in a state of great turmoil. The Games would do the Chinese people no good, and the Olympic movement itself no good."

Then there is the key question of nationalism. "If China gets the Games," says Wei, "that would inflame extreme nationalism. It would play a harmful role in the moral and spiritual lives of the people. The Party would promote itself to anti-Western elements, and it might even be encouraged to attack Taiwan." In this regard, "there is a clear parallel to Berlin—the regime would be bolder." But if Beijing were again denied the Games, would that not incite further nationalism and xenophobia? "Just the opposite," answers Wei. "The regime would have gone unrewarded. When the bad boy is not behaving himself, we should not encourage him, but find a way to tell him he is wrong."

Justin Yu, a Chinese journalist working in New York, points out that the regime uses sports to puff itself up before its own people, much as the Eastern-bloc countries used to do. The Olympics, according to Yu, are strictly "a tool for Beijing to use. The Games give them a reason to crush Falun Gong, for example. [These are the meditators and slow-movement exercisers who so vex the Party, and who are arrested, tortured, and killed.] The regime can say, 'So many foreigners are coming, we have to show our good side. So let's chase out all the trouble-makers, hunt them down to the very last one.' They will say to people, 'We have to show the world that we are unified. You have no freedom, but we have the Olympics. So sacrifice more, be patient, and accept more people in jail.' And if people believe that having the Olympics will raise the prestige of the PRC, they will go along with it."

What, though, of the argument that the Olympics would put the government "in the spotlight"?

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Yu scoffs: "People are always talking about the 'spotlight': The Asian Games in 1990, the International Women's Conference in 1995—these international events are supposed to put the regime 'in the spotlight.' Actually, they just provide an excuse for the regime to cleanse and purge the city. They make a Disney village—clean and nice. Where is Mickey Mouse? They move out laborers from the country, who may not look so good. Intellectuals, dissidents, certain important political prisoners held in Beijing jails—all are moved out, transferred, because the government doesn't want anyone to visit with them."

Concludes Yu, "The government's general line is: 'Whoever is against us shows us no respect. You're either for us or against us. The Dalai Lama—he is against us. Against China. We have an international event now, so let's crack down on anyone who might embarrass us.'" In other words, "The Communists create an atmosphere, a mood, in which they can do anything."

Su Xiaokang, the Princeton, N.J.-based editor of *Democratic China*, an online magazine, puts it this way: "After Tiananmen Square, the government had no authority. So they had to find another source of support—that was nationalism. They made everything a matter of Chinese pride. They had lost trust, and something like the Olympics is a way of getting it back. They took Hong Kong back. They want to take Taiwan back. The Olympics would strengthen them, make them look good. That's why they want them so badly."

EXACTLY THE WRONG CITY

Do they ever. The authorities are back to their old tricks—having the streets polished, insisting that bare-chested men put on shirts, offering English lessons on buses. They even went so far as to withdraw 27 athletes and 13 coaches on the eve of the Sydney Olympics. They had been "doping," of course, and China was loath to see anything tarnish its Olympic image with another vote coming up. More ominously, the mayor of Beijing, rallying the troops, made so bold as to say that China must "battle and crush Falun Gong and other cult organizations." With so much at stake, not an ounce of deviation can be tolerated.

The regime is also playing very heavily the numbers card. The argument is: We are almost a fifth of the earth's population, so how can you withhold the Games from us? Lectured one official, "The Olympic Games belong to the whole world. The fact that the Games have not yet been held in China is a failure of the Olympic movement." Pressed on human rights, the official said huffily, "There is *no* excuse for denying the dreams of 1.3 billion people to hold the Olympics in Beijing."

This line may prove hard to resist. But, again, the "international community" confronts a question: Is holding the Games in a country like China consonant with the ideals of what we used to call "Olympism"? And should the Games be used as a political carrot, or stick? Those of us who—even into adulthood, despite layers of scandal and commercialism and cynicism—love the Olympics should choke on the idea of watching tyrants and butcherers preside smilingly over the Games, just as Hitler did. (And, ultimately, what one thinks of the Olympics in Beijing probably comes down to what one thinks of the regime in Beijing.) Of all the cities in this great, vast world, from Tipperary to Timbuktu, why the capital of Red China?

Here is a first principle, a simple criterion: The Games should not be held in any country whose own people are not free to leave. That is just for starters. Juan Antonio Samaranch and his boys have four other finalists for 2008: Paris, Toronto, Istanbul, and Osaka. Any of them would do. Beijing would be a disgrace. **NR**

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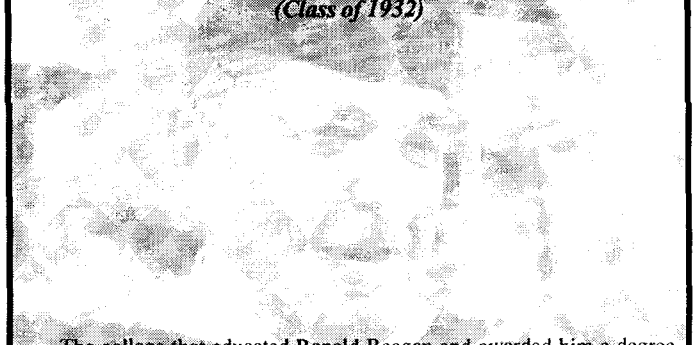

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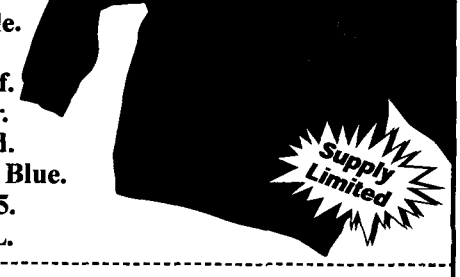

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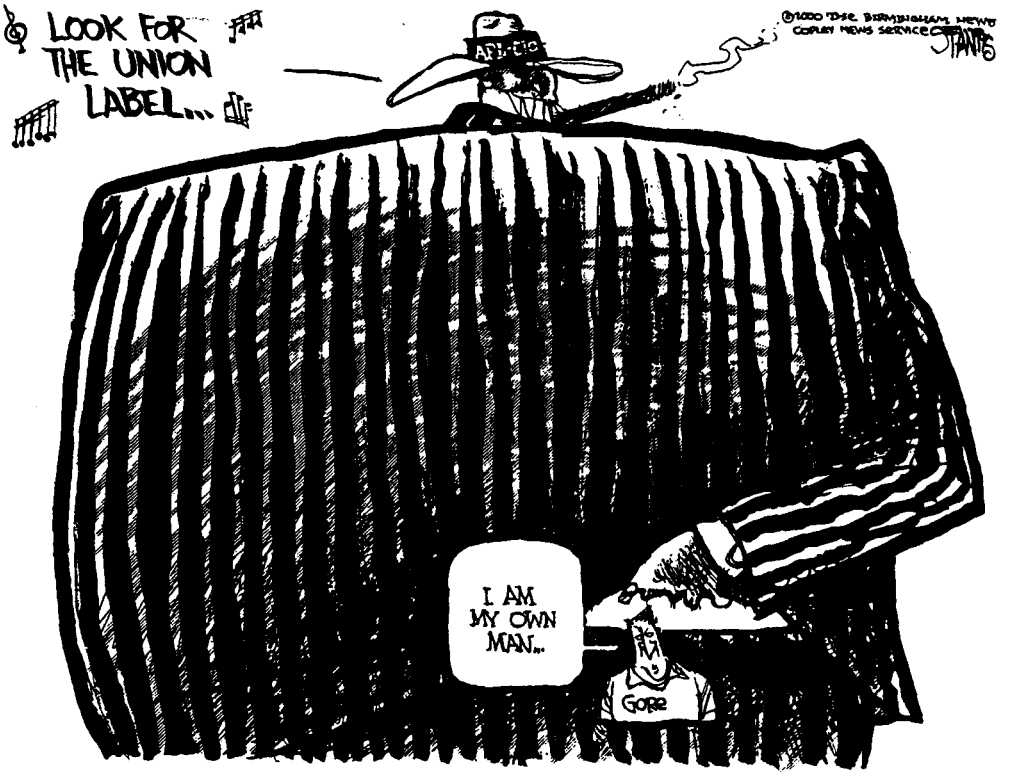

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"Well, I can see that we'll have to flesh these out with a few buzzwords . . ."

Tim Russert's Question

When Mrs. Clinton, later on,
And by then feeling put upon,
Discovered Bill's adultery
Was no right-wing conspiracy;
Was she, at some serene sunrise,
Moved—ever—to apologize?
Her answer up in Buffalo
Was unambiguously "No."

—W. H. von Dreele

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"TSK! IMAGINE BUSH USING THAT KINDA' LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC!"

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Dear Rusty,

Now that I'm president, I have the opportunity to make dreams come true!

Okay, strike that. See, what's been happening lately, Rusty, is that I've pretty much accepted the fact that I'm going to win the election. On some level, of course, I always knew that I would—the Bible is pretty clear in predicting a Gore presidency—but it took some time for the truth to really sink in. Like Jesus Himself, I doubted.

See, there I go again. Tipper's been after me about getting too cocky, too sure of myself. She's been a worrier all her life, Rusty. And now that I've got this one in the bag—three points ahead in the battleground states!—she's convinced that I'm going to do something to blow it.

"You're getting stiff and superior again, Al," she said to me, after a wonderful day of connecting to working voters.

"I am not, Tipper," I said unto her. "Didn't you see all those marvelous working people cheering for Me?"

"You're saying 'me' in a funny way, Al," Tipper nitpicked. "Almost like you're capitalizing the 'm.'"

"That's so silly," I spake. "I am a simple farmer. I bring a message of joy and free prescription drugs to the people. They receive that message with gladness and gratitude. I testify to my good works—low unemployment, a booming economy—and promise them a future kingdom. What's the big deal?"

"I'm just worried that you're getting carried away, Al. I can hear it in your voice. You're getting that priesty tone again."

Tipper always forgets that I went to divinity school. And while I freely admit that I'm an imperfect soul, some of that divinity I studied must have rubbed off, right? I mean, it stands to reason, doesn't it? When I look out at all of those hopeful faces—the faces of the hardworking Americans who just want targeted tax cuts and free Percocet, I'm struck with the awesome responsibility of my mission. If not now, Rusty, then when? And if not Me, then why bother?

"I'm just trying to fill the hungry with good things, Tipper," I said. "The rich and the powerful interests and the HMOs and the big oil companies I'm going to send away until February."

Later that day, I connected on a powerful level with another warrior for the working American, my very good Jewish friend, Joe Lieberman.

"Joe," I spoke, and thence came the utterance: "Tipper thinks we may be getting a bit too cocky, a bit too sure of ourselves."

"Gosh, Al," he said, "I can't see how. We've been racing around the country non-stop, fighting for America's working people, fighting for America's prescription-drug habits, fighting for America's working prescription-drug families."

"I agree, Brother Joe," I said. The long sleeve of My earth-toned robe grazed him lightly as I laid My hands upon him. "And we've been taking on the filth-mongers and the false prophets of the entertainment industry, too."

Brother Joe nodded sagely.

"That check came in, by the way," I spake. I handed him a large check from a Hollywood talent agency. He took it in his hands, pressed it lightly to his lips, and placed it in his jacket pocket.

"Look in your pocket, Brother Joe," I said.

"But why?" he doubted. "There's nothing but a check from a talent agency in there."

"Look in your pocket, Brother Joe," I said, louder, through the whirlwind.

He did so. A golden light shone from his face.

"Look, Brother Al!" he cried. "That single check has become three checks. No, four! No, five! One from a studio, one from a Baldwin brother, two—no, three!—from major record labels. And after we've been criticizing and threatening them, yet they still give us money? And we take it? It's almost immoral, well . . . it's almost immoral."

I looked into his eyes and became very quiet.

He cleared his throat. "Almost," he said. "I think the key word here is 'almost.'"

I don't want to boast, Rusty, but with a man of such devout Orthodox faith on my side, I'm reminded of another simple man, also a fighter for the poor and the sick. Guess Who I remind Me of?

Your Friend,

Al

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Marriage Matters

JAMES Q. WILSON

The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially, by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher (Doubleday, 260 pp., $24.95)

The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, by Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee (Hyperion, 347 pp. $24.95)

NEITHER of these books could have been published forty years ago because then we did not have the facts on which they are based. But neither *would* have been published because nobody needed to be told that marriage is a good idea and divorce a bad one. Facts, and the times, have changed. And in our present culture, it is not yet clear that the message of either book will prove persuasive. As Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher write on the first page of their book, over the last few decades we have managed to transform marriage, "the most basic and universal of human institutions, into something controversial." And as any academic expert reading Judith Wallerstein's book on divorce will know, a lot of scholars do not think divorce is such a bad idea.

Reviewing these books cannot be separated from reviewing a culture that has made what my parents thought was common sense into grounds for contention. The argument, of course, is not

Mr. Wilson is the Ronald Reagan Professor of Public Policy at Pepperdine University and an emeritus professor at UCLA. He is the author of *The Moral Sense* and is writing a book on the marriage problem.

By Roman Genn

on the surface of things. Almost every American thinks having a happy marriage is a good idea and only a tiny minority believe that remaining single is an important goal. But what is true in theory is not true in practice. A lot of children are born to unwed mothers, many women getting married have to apologize for apparently giving up their "freedom," and divorce ends roughly half of all marriages. As sociologist Norval Glenn has shown, the proportion of people who are happy in their marriages has gone down since the early 1970s.

Waite and Gallagher set out to show that marriage is in fact very good for people in countless practical ways. Waite is a professor of sociology at the University of Chicago and former president of the Population Association; Gallagher directs the Marriage Project at the Institute for American Values in New York City. Both are well equipped to display the evidence, and it is extraordinarily persuasive.

Married people live longer than unmarried ones, and while they are alive have better sex lives than their unmarried counterparts. Being married helps them accumulate more wealth than single people and to live more cheaply than two individuals. Two cannot live more cheaply than one, but they can live more cheaply than two people who date each other but live apart. Married men are much less likely than bachelors to be criminals, alcoholics, or drug addicts, and this helps explain why they live longer. A wife tells them to settle down and stay away from nights at the barroom or the street corner, and most men respond. As a result their mortality rate is lower.

An obvious rejoinder to these facts is self-selection: Men who get money, avoid drugs, and stay away from crime are also the men who are likely to marry (and to find a woman who will marry them). Being married, therefore, explains nothing; it simply identifies people who know how to survive.

That argument cannot be entirely rebutted without a controlled experiment in which men are randomly assigned to marriage or bachelorhood; happily, social scientists can't do that. But the evidence strongly suggests that self-selection is not the key factor. No matter how men become unmarried—by being bachelors, becoming separated or divorced, or becoming widowers—they lose ground in terms of health.

Though marriage helps men's health and earnings, it is not true, as some suppose, that women are net losers. Married women acquire more wealth, their mental health improves, and their happiness increases. Raising children can, of course, put a lot of stress on women, but those who raise them single are psychologically worse off than those who are married. And for most women, having children is vastly more beneficial than whatever it costs in midnight feedings and endless chores.

Since marriage has so many benefits, especially for men, it is astonishing that it should be in so much trouble. If men

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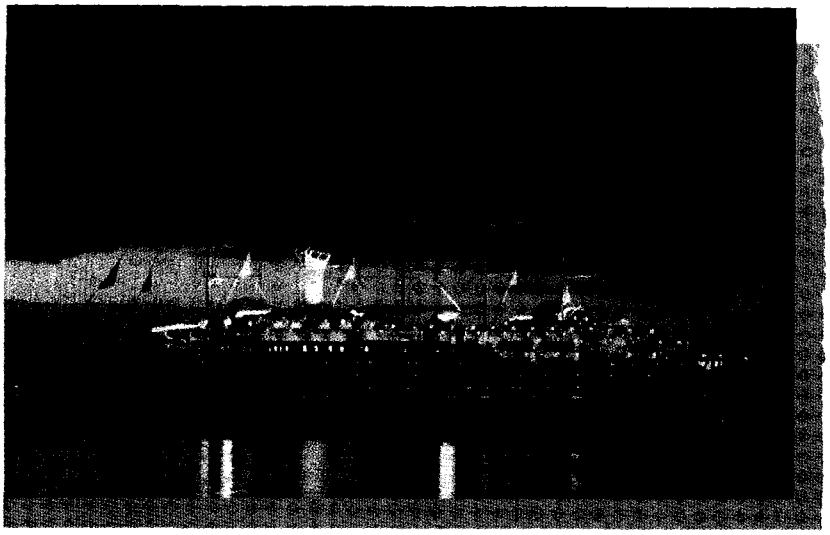

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Dec. 11 (Mon.)	At Sea	Morning & Afternoon Seminars, Cocktail Reception (pre-dinner)
Dec. 12 (Tue.)	Nevis, 8AM–5PM	Late-night smoker (post-dinner)
Dec. 13 (Wed.)	St Martin, 8AM–1AM	Morning Seminar
Dec. 14 (Thur.)	St Barthelemy, 8AM–5PM	Morning Seminar
Dec. 15 (Fri.)	Iles des Saintes, 8AM–5PM	Afternoon Seminar, Late-night smoker (post-dinner)
Dec. 16 (Sat.)	Pigeon Island, 7AM–4PM	Afternoon Seminar, Cocktail Reception (pre-dinner)
Dec. 17 (Sun.)	Bridgetown, 6AM arrival	

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on average are going to live longer, be happier, and earn more money when they marry, why do so many men reject it? A few have no interest in marriage because they are gay or confirmed bachelors, but for many decades an increasing number have also rejected marriage to women whom they have impregnated. It is as if something good were offered to people and, preoccupied with what is in their immediate interest, they reject it in favor of the pleasures of unmarried sex, brief cohabitations, unmarried parenthood, and frequent divorce. A bachelor may notice other men who are happily married, but he does not link their happiness to marriage. Instead, he repeats the tired jokes about not being "tied down" to the "old lady" when he could be "partying" with "babes." What babes? Sex for single men is less frequent and less enjoyable than for married ones. Men who choose to remain single spend most of their evenings at home, eating Cheez Dip and watching wrestling on television.

But a puzzle remains. If marriage is so beneficial, why has the divorce rate shot up, and what consequences has it had for children? Divorces are more common because they are more respectable. No-fault divorce laws passed in the 1960s and 1970s have encouraged divorce, but these new laws were not controversial when they were put on the statute books. The culture has changed, and the law changed to catch up with it. A culture that once made divorce next to impossible became one that made it easy.

The culture made it easy, in my view, because it has fully adopted the view that everyone has equal rights, that all agreements are private contracts that can be renegotiated at will, and that no higher authority or external public has the authority to ask people to act contrary to their preferences so long as they put no one else in danger. But Waite and Gallagher show that the erosion of marriage does put other people at risk, and Judith Wallerstein and her coauthors suggest how grave a risk it is.

Wallerstein has been following a group of middle-class, mostly white children of divorced parents for 25 years. In her previous books, she has argued that these children were harmed by divorce; in this one, she shows that the harms extend into their adult lives. Wallerstein and Lewis, both psychologists, together with Blakeslee, a science writer for the *New York Times*, have written what is essentially a biographical account of their subjects—Karen, Gary, Larry, Carol, Paula, Billy, and Lisa—with chapter-length stories about each. The authors' conclusions are that divorce not only hits many children hard when it occurs, but that the hurt lasts and sometimes deepens. At first they are frightened and angry, terrified of being abandoned. After that initial shock their home becomes a lonely place, one that often moves as their custody parent relocates or they shuttle back and forth between two parents. When they become adults, the suffering is greatest,

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Since marriage has so many benefits, especially for men, it is astonishing that it should be in so much trouble.

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as they find they have no model for love and commitment. "No one taught me," they complain. Some products of divorce learn to manage this; others do not, and many go on to create the same problems for their own children.

There is a problem in this analysis that has been pointed out over the years by several of Wallerstein's critics. The harms that befall children can result from tension and conflict in a married family as well as from divorce, and it is difficult to know whether pre-divorce conflict or divorce itself is the culprit. Moreover, studying divorced families without a control group of similar intact ones makes it hard to draw strong conclusions. Frank Furstenberg at the University of Pennsylvania and Andrew J. Cherlin at Johns Hopkins, both important family scholars, have suggested that divorce helps children who would otherwise be trapped in violent families or has a harmful effect that is short-lived compared to the long-term effect of incessant parental quarreling. Wallerstein and her coauthors do not reply in any clear fashion to these criticisms other than to say that now, many years after their research began, they have assembled and studied a comparison group. But that group was formed long after their study group, the two are not statistically identical, and its members were suggested to the authors by the children of divorced parents from among their one-time friends.

This book, then, like Wallerstein's previous books, is not so much a work of social science as a collection of biographies linked with therapeutic suggestions. As a social scientist, I am worried when people draw large conclusions from a study that was originally designed to do little more than suggest hypotheses for research. Most unsettling is the fact that while some of Wallerstein's critics have come around to her way of thinking, she does not refer to these developments or make any effort to show that other data can support her findings. Cherlin, for example, who has been quite critical of her work, published in 1998 an important study based on a close analysis of all the children born in Great Britain in the first week of March 1958. These people, their parents, and their teachers have been studied repeatedly over the last forty years. Cherlin and his colleagues showed that some of the emotional problems the subjects reported at age 33 could be explained by characteristics revealed when they were only seven years old, in most cases long before a divorce had occurred. These problems clearly intensified after divorce, suggesting that "divorce and its aftermath may have effects that persist into adulthood."

This statement is a very important admission in the long-running academic debate between those who minimize and those who maximize the effects of divorce, and it is based on a very sophisticated statistical analysis of long-term information. It would have been better if Wallerstein had told her readers more about what we actually know, as well as what she herself has suggested, not only to confirm some of her findings, but to suggest that others remain subject to revision or even refutation.

But if, as I think, her fundamental argument that divorce hurts children is true, what should be done about it? If we wish to have stronger marriages, and most Americans want this very much, how can this be brought about? Neither book, in my view, gives us much helpful

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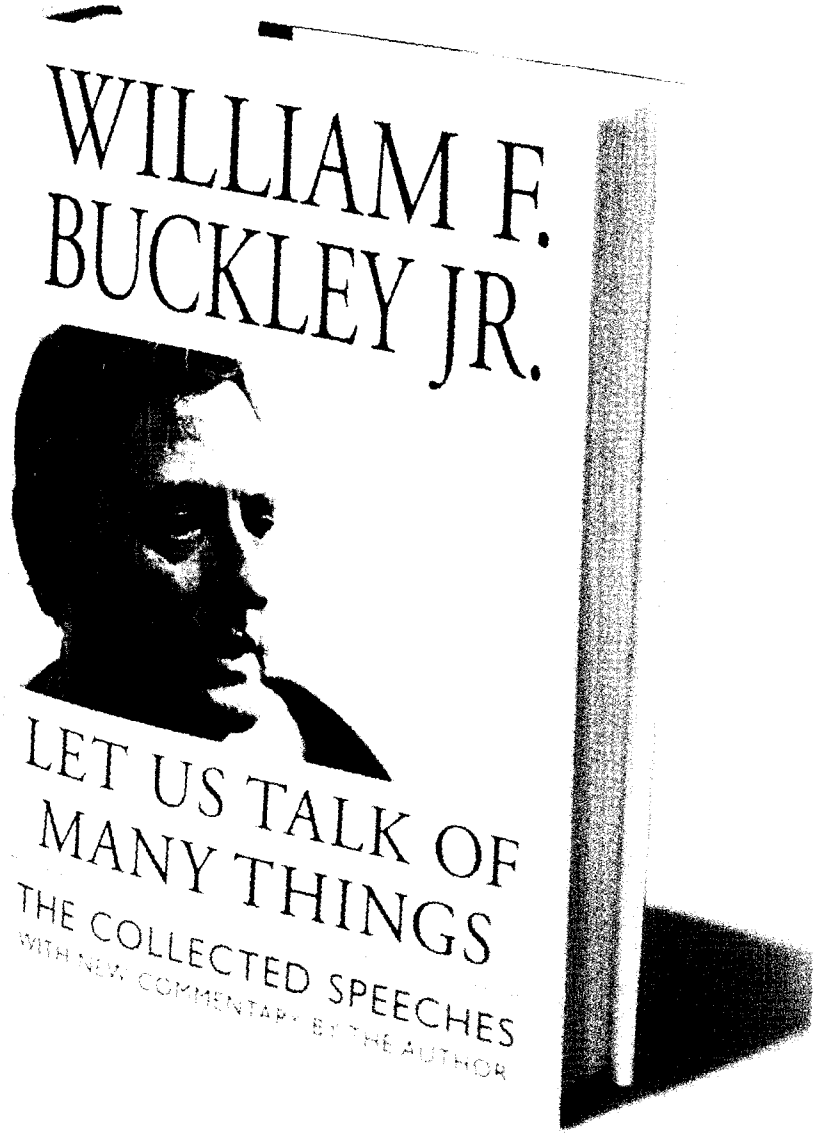

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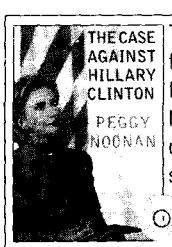
advice. Both Waite and Gallagher and Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee say what anyone will say when we confront a massive cultural change: Get the facts out, rely on education, enlist the churches, "strengthen marriage." However, if we indeed confront, as I think we do, a profound cultural change, then education and the churches and all right-thinking people have caused precisely what these authors would now like them to change. Waite and Gallagher want to change tax and marriage laws to be more supportive of marriage, but not, I think, with much confidence that ending the IRS's marriage penalty will help keep families together. If a few hundred dollars a year can make a difference in marriage rates, then this country is in even more trouble than I fear. Wallerstein and her coauthors want paid family leave and more flextime, but they adduce no evidence that these changes would make any difference.

There may well be things we can do to ease somewhat the rate of out-of-wedlock births and slow down a bit the divorce rate. But to expect that we can make major changes is to deny the most obvious fact: Virtually every Western nation faces exactly the same problems as we do. Improving the prospects for marriage, therefore, cannot mean simply fixing some mistakes Americans have made; it must mean changing how a large portion of the most prosperous and best-educated part of the world has evolved. Not only can Americans not end a phenomenon that extends throughout the Western world, it is unlikely that anyone can change it by the conventional means of public policy. **NR**



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Disarming Errors

CLAYTON E. CRAMER

& DAVE KOPEL

Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture, by Michael A. Bellesiles (Knopf, 603 pp., $30)

MICHAEL BELLESILES, a professor of history at Emory University, has written a startling book that claims to demolish many myths about the gun culture of pre–Civil War America. Hailed as a major work of revisionist history, it is getting a lot of attention: Bellesiles has been cited, profiled, or reviewed by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *National Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, London *Telegraph*, *The Economist*, and the *New York Times Book Review*, which featured a fawning cover essay by Garry Wills.

Bellesiles's work is receiving glowing reviews from those who would like to limit and regulate the right to bear arms in this country. Hitherto, their standard argument has been that the Second Amendment is merely an anachronistic leftover from colonial times. Bellesiles goes further by trying to show that even in its own time the idea of a well-armed and self-regulated populace was a delusion: Most Americans were at first indifferent to guns, then positively hostile, and almost no one hunted.

Perhaps least controversial, though still contentious, is Bellesiles's negative portrayal of the American militia. Historians have long recognized that the militia was not as effective as rose-colored odes to the American Revolution have claimed, but Bellesiles regards it as little more than a gaggle of nitwits. "One could go on and on with examples of inept, poorly armed, and horribly disciplined militia almost losing the War of 1812 for the United States," he writes. "Mostly the militia just did not show up." A more balanced and realistic account can be found in Mark Kwasny's excellent book, *Washington's Partisan War*. Detailing the use of the militia in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, Kwasny shows that while militiamen could not, by themselves, defeat the British in a pitched battle, they were essential to American success: They responded quickly to attacks, harassed the Redcoats, and guarded regions where George Washington could not send the Continentals. Though exasperated by their penchant for coming and going as they wished, Washington never questioned the militiamen's bravery or loyalty.

Bellesiles's major premise is that guns and hunting were scarce in America until just before the Civil War. This, he says, was partly because the U.S. lacked significant manufacturing capability—hence guns were very expensive—but also because there was no culture of gun ownership in America. In the period before the Mexican War, "the majority of American men did not care about guns. They were indifferent to owning guns, and they had no apparent interest in learning how to use them." He claims that even hunting was almost unknown until the mid 1830s, when a small number of wealthy Americans chose to ape the British upper class. Prior to that, he says, most hunting was done by a small number of professional hunters or by Indians. For Bellesiles, this lack of interest in guns reflects the peaceful, Arcadian nature of early America. Indeed, he would have us believe that by the 1830s, a pacifist movement fiercely hostile to guns and hunting was becoming a major influence on American society.

Bellesiles's book is being presented as a major work of original scholarship. In particular, his copious footnotes have impressed reviewers, suggesting that the author has put an enormous amount of work into examining a variety of primary sources. *Arming America* is certainly a novel work, in two senses: Much of it is "new," and much of it is highly imaginative fiction. Indeed, a close inspection of Bellesiles's sources reveals that they not

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only fail to support his argument, but prove precisely the reverse: Guns were in fact widely owned, used, and appreciated in pre–Civil War America.

Take Baynard Rush Hall's memoir *The New Purchase*, describing frontier life in Indiana in 1816. Hall offers a detailed account of the importance of hunting for most settlers. Target-shooting matches were common, and Hall makes occasional reference to pistols, with no indication that they were rare or regarded with particular concern. He also describes the use of rifles, both by settlers pursuing criminals and by criminals trying to avoid arrest. Though these descriptions take up 41 pages of Hall's book (including an entire chapter on the joys of target shooting), Bellesiles somehow missed them. He also missed Anne Newport Royall's discussion of the commonplace use of guns for self-defense and hunting in her *Letters from Alabama, 1817–1822*, which he claims to have read.

Bellesiles expends a lot of energy promoting the idea that hunting was a rare activity in early America, restricted to professionals and Indians. In support, he discusses Charles Augustus Murray's *Travels in North America*, which details the Englishman's late-1830s hunting expedition in America. "Hunting in America disappointed Murray," writes Bellesiles. "He had expected more gentlemen hunters, but only army officers on frontier posts seemed to fit that description." The average reader might conclude that there weren't many hunters in America, since Bellesiles has spent many pages making this claim. But Murray met lots of hunters, most of whom weren't "gentlemen," but rather ordinary farmers: "I lodged the first night at the house of a farmer, about seven miles from the village, who joined the habits of a hunter to those of an agriculturalist, as is indeed the case with all the country people in this district; nearly every man has a rifle, and spends part of his time in the chase."

Although Bellesiles has grossly mischaracterized some accounts, there are dozens of others that he omits altogether—including common works such as Alexis de Tocqueville's *Journey to America*. A young Alabama lawyer told Tocqueville in 1831, "There is no one here but carries arms under his clothes. At the slightest quarrel, knife or pistol comes to hand." Tocqueville also presents evidence that widespread gun ownership was not peculiar to Alabama. A Tennessee farmer tells him: "There is not a farmer but passes some of his time hunting and owns a good gun." Indeed, in a typical "peasant's cabin" in Kentucky or Tennessee one finds "a fairly clean bed, some chairs, a good gun, often some books and almost always a newspaper."

Historians have generally traced America's gun culture to the intersection of several independent causes, including the abundance of game and the absence of an aristocratic monopoly on hunting; the need for firearms for protection on the Indian frontier and in rough urban centers; the American ideology of individualism and self-reliance; the role of armed Americans in securing independence and in taming the frontier—and of course the Second Amendment, which every 19th-century legal commentator and court agreed was a guarantee of a personal right to keep and bear arms.

Bellesiles argues instead that the development of an American gun culture was an outgrowth of the federal government's continual encouragement of gun ownership as a cheap alternative to maintaining a large standing army, combined with the expansion of gun manufacturing and consequent reductions in the price of guns, and the availability of surplus guns after the Civil War. In brief, Bellesiles, contrary to the historical record, sees guns as something that the masses didn't want, and that only continual government pressure and blandishments made attractive.

Although Bellesiles tells us much less than he promises about the origins of America's historic gun culture, he has done for modern gun control what his Emory colleague and advisor Arthur Kellermann has done for public health in numerous articles: produce an enormous body of impressive-looking factoids ready for instant deployment by political ideologues. That subsequent scholars have found Kellermann's research to be riddled with factual and methodological flaws has done little to reduce the frequency with which his phony claims are used to terrify Americans. Sadly, Bellesiles's fictional history is likely to enjoy similar success. **NR**

Self-Defeated

RANDY ROBERTS

The Devil and Sonny Liston, by Nick Tosches (Little, Brown, 266 pp., $24.95)

IT'S official: Writing about boxing is hip again. I had thought Joyce Carol Oates's compassionate 1987 essay "On Boxing" had effectively extracted every ounce of testosterone from the favorite sport of Hemingway and Liebling, but I was wrong. In 1998, *New Yorker* editor David Remnick wrote a hymn to Muhammad Ali, and last year Denzel Washington starred in a movie about Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. Ali was great, noble, and brave, a credit to the best of America, Remnick said. Carter was sensitive, misunderstood, and framed, a victim of the worst of America, Washington said. Now Nick Tosches, contributing editor of *Vanity Fair* and biographer of Dean Martin, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Mafia financier Michele Sindona, has weighed in, taking for his exegesis Charles "Sonny" Liston, a heavyweight boxer who fought 54 fights, scored 39 knockouts, held the title between 1962 and 1964, and died in 1971 of a likely drug overdose.

Physically and psychologically, Sonny Liston seemed to have been constructed with boxing in mind.

Until now, hardly anyone has had anything nice to say about Liston. The best that could be said was that he rarely pretended to be anything other than the ex-con and recidivist thug that

Mr. Roberts is the coauthor of *Heavy Justice: The State of Indiana v. Michael G. Tyson* and the author of biographies of Jack Dempsey and Jack Johnson.

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he was. Prison was never far from Liston's mind, and perhaps in one form or another prison was all he knew. His first confinement was in Arkansas, on the Morledge plantation where he was born sometime in 1929, 1930, 1931, or 1932; as with so many other aspects of Liston's early life, nobody bothered to remember. Liston's first jailer was his own father, who sired a passel of children and maintained that if they were big enough to go to the dinner table they were big enough to go to the fields.

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"The only thing my old man ever gave me was a beating," Liston would later say. The copper-colored scars on his back said more than he ever did about a childhood that left him, as Tosches (over)writes, "a man as hurtful as he was hurt, as deadly as he was deadened, and whose soul beneath the layers of its scar tissue was to others hidden and unknowable, to himself a dark and dangerous place rarely to be visited and never to be delved."

Maybe he learned to inflict pain from his father; certainly years of hard labor gave him the raw strength to hurt other people. In the late 1940s he fled the cotton fields of Arkansas for the streets of St. Louis. He couldn't read or write; in fact, he had no legitimate skills. He was, as Tosches observes, a nobody from nowhere, "not good for a damned thing in this world except for chopping cotton and robbing people." His talents as a criminal were equally deficient: He tended to wear the same yellow-and-black-checked shirt and soon became known as the Yellow Shirt Bandit. Easily apprehended by the St. Louis police, who gave him a touch of his own brutality, Liston was sentenced to five years in the Missouri State Penitentiary.

Tosches does not sentimentalize Liston, describing him as a thug, an urban nightmare, a man "who looked at you like he didn't know whether to drink your blood or spit on you, or, worse, like he didn't even see you with those deep dark grave-dirt-colored dead man's eyes of his." Nor does he suggest that prison reformed Liston. It did, however, introduce him to a legitimate form of violence. Physically and psychologically, Liston seemed to have been constructed with boxing in mind. He was big, powerful, and quick, with huge hands and long arms. He was also merciless, remorseless, and terribly fond of dishing out pain. By 1952 he was out of prison—though he would return a few years later—and on his way toward a new career.

From the retirement of Joe Louis in 1949 until Muhammad Ali won the title in 1964, two men monopolized championship boxing. On the surface, James Norris Jr., head of the International Boxing Club, promoted most of the important bouts. Under the surface, Norris answered to mob boss Frankie Carbo. Exactly when Carbo began to control Liston's career is difficult to date. Yet it is fairly certain that Liston belonged to the mob almost from the start of his career, that they arranged his fights and perhaps even orchestrated a few of the results.

With friends like these, Liston could not help but succeed. Except for another brief stint in prison for beating up a cop, Liston's boxing stock rose steadily. He didn't just defeat the best heavyweights in the world, he hurt and destroyed them. Cleveland Williams, Nino Valdes, Zora Folley, Eddie Machen—few went the distance with Liston. For a few years, heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson ducked Liston, an act of prudence that was roundly applauded. But in 1962, Patterson agreed to fight Liston. "You know, there's a little bit of good in everybody," Patterson said generously. "I'd like to run over him in a car," Liston retorted. The contest lasted two minutes and six seconds.

Between winning the title from Patterson and losing it to Ali a year and a half later, Liston had only one fight, a rematch with Patterson that he won almost as quickly as the first. Some of Liston's friends believed that he entertained fleeting thoughts of being a champion/role model, but his penchant for carrying guns and driving while drinking made it difficult for Liston to present a Boy Scout image.

Perhaps the ease of Liston's victories over Patterson convinced Tosches that Liston was simply unbeatable; hence any loss he suffered must have been fixed. Tosches shows little respect for the beloved Ali, the darling of the media and white intelligentsia. In Tosches's view, Ali was a performer whose act lacked grace and humor, while Liston was the hero of every street punk, black or white, who couldn't afford the price of a boxing ticket. Unlike Remnick, Tosches doesn't see Liston as an overmatched fighter but a victim of bad publicity and his own poor decisions. According to Tosches, Liston's loss to Ali had nothing to do with

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old age and the outrageous fortunes of youth: He threw the fight, and the 1965 rematch as well.

There have always been such rumors: Liston was afraid of the Black Muslims in the first Ali fight, hooked on smack in the second; the Mob told him to take a dive and like a good soldier he did. Norman Mailer once even suggested that Ali, the great artist, perfected the ability "to make the other fighter fall secretly, helplessly, in love with him," resulting in a sort of unconscious surrender. One thing is certain: After the fights, Ali continued to display greatness. For the most part, Liston didn't.

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Liston had ample opportunities to become more than a thug, but he never quite succeeded.

■

Liston's end surprised no one. He died in Las Vegas sometime in early 1971, most likely of a drug overdose, though the exact time and cause of death were never established. Early in *The Devil and Sonny Liston*, Tosches writes that only Liston "and the man who killed him knew the date of his death," a fine tease if ever there was one. But at the end, after considering a few general suspects—cops, mobsters, drug dealers—Tosches wearily concludes, "I think he took too much dope and died. . . . He rode a fast train from nowhere, and it dumped him at the falling-off place at the end of the line. . . . There is only one real cause of death, and that is death."

Clearly, Tosches has not written a traditional biography. Attracted to the "umbrous" side of life, Tosches was drawn to Liston in the same way that he was previously drawn to Jerry Lee Lewis and Dean Martin—because they were men whose dysfunctional personalities helped them succeed, only to carry them over the edge to self-destruction. Tosches admires Liston because he never tried to court white integrationist politicians, as Patterson did, or curry the favor of black separatists like Ali; because after a few minutes with Vice President Lyndon Johnson he was ready to "blow this bum off," and because at the height of Afro-American chic he never wore a dashiki. Liston was what he was, "the ultimate outlaw," feared and hated by whites and blacks alike: "His badness transcended race." Liston is Nick Tosches's nihilistic answer to the coaches who preach that sport develops character; his response to such writers as Norman Mailer and George Plimpton who seek "meaning and metaphor" in boxing.

In the end, Liston's life makes a compelling story but offers no edifying moral. He came from the bottom, reached the top of his profession, then self-destructed. Along the way, he was a problem for everyone, particularly liberals who felt he was a poor racial representative for a country moving away from segregation. Even the Mob gave up on him. In a country that celebrates second chances and the reinvention of self, Liston had ample opportunities to become more than a thug, but he never quite succeeded. He was an early version of Mike Tyson or Dennis Rodman, quietly insisting that he would be as bad as he wanted to be. And as his own opponent, he was undefeated. **NR**

■ SHELF LIFE ■

THE Internet is fast becoming a Borgesian universal library of books in print. Millions of books are available almost immediately, through a simple click of the mouse. But even if we prescind from the conservative complaint that books aren't as good as they used to be, it's still statistically improbable that the best books in any given field will happen to be the most recent ones. That's why it's so important that worthy old titles be restored to print; they need to be kept in the classrooms and in the conversation.

ISI Books is doing excellent work on this. *Shakespeare as Political Thinker* (416 pp., $24.95), edited by John E. Alvis and Thomas G. West, is a good example. This anthology, an expanded edition of a 1981 work, is defiantly untrendy in its contributors' refusal to read back into the Shakespearean canon the political agendas of the present. In his introduction, Alvis says that "if Shakespeare composes a supreme fiction, its supremacy rests upon its singular comprehensiveness as an image of truth"; based as it is on a knowingness about human nature, Shakespeare's politics sets modest goals, and "we may doubt that Shakespeare envisions the likelihood of discovering even these . . . realized in actual historical regimes."

Paul A. Cantor's essay on *The Tempest* is especially noteworthy in discovering important political insights in one of the least political plays. Cantor points out that Prospero lost his dukedom because—though a very bright man—he had failed to understand the motivations of human nature. His skillful use of the storm and shipwreck proves that he has learned his lesson. The public man must deal with human nature as he finds it, before he can hope to establish justice: a central insight of politics.

Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor (357 pp., $24.95) by Ellis Sandoz—a revision of his 1971 original—is another impressive recent release. Dostoevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is a story within the story of the 1879–80 novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, but it has taken on an intellectual life of its own as a philosophical parable on free will and utopianism. The "Legend" is a monologue in which a church official argues—to his silent prisoner, Christ—that the exercise of authority for people's good is more desirable than the preservation of individual freedom.

Sandoz gives a convincing account of the "Legend" as "an allegory of the cosmic drama of the creation as this is played out in the history of mankind and in the microcosm of the human soul." The totalitarian temptation is part of freedom itself; Dostoevsky is so scrupulous in his presentation that some readers take the "Legend," out of context, as an endorsement of that impulse. Sandoz's explication of this powerful work will make readers want to tackle it themselves, and reach their own conclusions.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

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■ ESSAY ■

He Springs Eternal

S.T. KARNICK

WHEN the American Film Institute (AFI) released its list of "America's 100 Funniest Movies," only one film starring Bob Hope made the cut: *Road to Morocco*, number 78. This was just the latest in a long string of slights directed at Hope during the past couple of decades. Although audiences still enjoy his movies on video, revisionist authors have painted Hope as a greedy, promiscuous hypocrite, in a stream of articles and books that includes Arthur Marx's *The Secret Life of Bob Hope* (1993) and Lawrence Quirk's relentlessly hostile and innuendo-filled *Bob Hope: The Road Well-Traveled* (1998).

The public, of course, has long seen Hope as a gifted comedian, a smart businessman, a patriotic benefactor of America's armed forces, and a cheerful, confident, warm-hearted fellow who liked golf and was a devoted family man. He made the Gallup list of America's most admired men on more than one occasion. Quirk and Marx, by contrast, portray him as utterly dependent on his joke writers, cold toward his family and friends, openly cruel to fellow performers and business associates, quick to lose his temper, and a chronic philanderer. Quirk presents countless single-source anecdotes depicting Hope as arrogant, egocentric, opportunistic, and vain, but also extremely insecure, especially about his sexuality. Quirk even argues that Hope had strong homosexual leanings that he suppressed and covered up with rampant philandering and frequent anti-homosexual barbs (a charge based solely on rumors attributed to homosexual activists).

Marx, a former joke writer for Hope (and son of rival comedian Groucho), contends that Hope fired women who refused to sleep with him and that he regarded his celebrated armed-forces entertainment tours largely as opportunities for philandering. Marx also argues that Hope's humor was superficial and prefabricated. Both authors maintain that Hope was never truly close to anyone, even Dolores, his wife of more than sixty years. Whereas the public Hope was an audacious, politically conservative satirist, the revisionists argue that the real Bob Hope was a master manipulator and monumental fraud.

This picture of Hope's personal life, whether true or not (I have my doubts), has succeeded in diverting attention from his formidable achievements as a performer. Hope was a true innovator in comic acting and, *pace* AFI, the star of several of the funniest films of all time. His best movies, radio programs, comic monologues, and other endeavors ironically upheld conservative, bourgeois values by mocking deviations from them (often best exhibited in his own conniving, cowardly, insouciant characters), and his public persona reinforced this deep-seated respect for respectability. Little wonder, then, that many critics today deride him and his impressive body of work.

Born near London, England, in 1903 and raised in a shabby neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio, Leslie Townes Hope entered show business in 1924 and soon found his métier emceeing in vaudeville. He climbed the showbiz ladder rapidly with the help of numerous gagwriters, whom he hired to produce a constant torrent of jokes often based on current events.

Although comics such as Will Rogers had preceded him in basing comedy on news events, Hope's level of topicality was highly innovative. Most theaters of the time did not allow obvious political references, but Hope survived because of his success with audiences and the owners' worries over dwindling attendance because of the Depression. In a characteristic early-1930s joke that combined politics and bathroom humor, Hope recounted how he told a woman that the restroom was "just around the corner" and she replied, "Don't give me any of that Hoover talk!"

With his snappy, smooth delivery and the best jokes money could buy, Hope was a star on Broadway at age 30. Within five years he had his own hit radio show and was making feature films for Paramount. His performance in *Big Broadcast of 1938*, his first full-length film, received rave reviews from Walter Winchell, Damon Runyon, and other top columnists.

In all these forms, Hope was an important innovator. In his very first radio series, a weekly program sponsored by Pepsodent, he sped up the medium's pace by increasing the number of segments and the quantity of jokes. His show created a new format: a combination of topical comic monologues, skits, and musical acts that remains the staple of TV talk and variety shows today. His wisecracking, smart-alecky commentary on daily events became the standard for television comics such as Johnny Carson, David Letterman, and the *Saturday Night Live* news segments. (Unfortunately, the radio programs' topicality makes some of the episodes—Hope appeared in 1,145 in his radio career—all but incomprehensible to today's listeners.) In his various television programs for NBC, starting in 1950, Hope added to the variety format's usual bland cheeriness a dose of sharp satire and ironic social comment (though only for the first few years). He began lampooning Sen. Joseph McCarthy in 1952, for example, well before the senator's 1954 downfall: "I have it on good authority that McCarthy is going to disclose the names of two million Communists. . . . He's just got his hands on the Moscow telephone directory."

■

Bob Hope was a true innovator in comic acting and the star of several of the funniest films of all time.

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Hope's comic persona was actually more than two millennia old: the wisecracking *eiron* of Greek comedy, whose ironic commentary deftly punctured the main characters' pomposity. Alternately self-confident and self-effacing, impertinent and ingratiating, this character was tailor-made for a Depression-era America frustrated with inept business and

Mr. Karnick is editor in chief of the bimonthly magazine *American Outlook*, published by the Hudson Institute.

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political leaders. Hope updated it for modern audiences by adopting the understated style of comics such as Jack Benny and George Burns, whose manner was appropriate to the more realistic media of radio and film. Even here he was innovative, for Benny and Burns were straight men, whereas Hope applied their style to comic characters. Hope also allowed himself to serve frequently as the butt of jokes ("Old Ski-Nose"), showing that he did not take himself too seriously and ensuring that audiences would not lose sympathy for him during the barrage of wisecracks.

But the movies are where Hope's greatest achievement lies. He hit his stride almost immediately, with *The Cat and the Canary* (1939), displaying a striking persona: wisecracking, comically cowardly, vain, greedy, deceptive, lustful, and usually thwarted in his schemes. At a particularly suspenseful moment, Hope declares, "I'm so scared, even my goose pimples have goose pimples." When asked, "Don't big, empty houses scare you?" he answers, "Not me, I used to be in vaudeville." Hope's wisecracks in the face of danger helped make this craven character likeable; the film received excellent reviews and was a huge box-office hit.

The next year, Paramount teamed him with Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour for *Road to Singapore*, and the comic's wisecracks and sniveling cowardice meshed perfectly with Crosby's suave superiority. The two male leads relentlessly took liberties with the script during filming—an almost unheard-of practice in the Hollywood of the time because of the studios' tight production schedules—creating an atmosphere of spontaneity and freshness that made the film a huge hit and inspired six sequels. In a typical exchange from the best of these, *Road to Utopia*, Hope's character catches the hiccups, and Crosby asks, "Can't you suppress it somehow?" "Frighten me!" Hope replies. "I can't," responds Crosby, "I haven't got a mirror."

Few people knew that these "improvisations" were carefully scripted by the actors' gagwriters, a procedure Hope employed throughout his film career. It worked perfectly for almost two decades. Most of Hope's films from the period feature him as a hustler trying to con other men out of money, women into bed, and heavies out of beating him to a pulp. *My Favorite Blonde*, *Road to Morocco*, *Road to Utopia*, *The Paleface*, *Son of Paleface*, *The Cat and the Canary*, *The Ghost Breakers*, and *The Princess and the Pirate* are noteworthy examples. *Fancy Pants*, *Monsieur Beaucaire*, and *Casanova's Big Night* all have Hope as a commoner impersonating a nobleman, a particularly effective role for him.

His best film is probably *The Lemon Drop Kid* (1951), from a Damon Runyon story. Hope plays a racetrack tout who, $10,000 in debt to a gangster, schemes to obtain the money by running a phony old-ladies' home and a streetcorner Santa Claus racket. Hope performs an unusual amount of physical humor, including a hilarious silent sequence in which he strips a department-store dummy naked to steal its clothes for a planned impersonation, while unbeknownst to him a large crowd and an angry policeman look on.

While building his film career, Hope also continued his radio shows, began his seemingly endless series of television specials, and earned plaudits for his public-service work, especially his countless benefit performances and personal appearances at American military bases around the world. But as his social standing and personal wealth increased, he lost something important to his art: outsider status. A wisecracking coward is funny only so long as he can credibly pretend he is at risk. When the outcast goes bald, puts on weight, wears cardigans, does commercials for multinational corporations, and flaunts his friendships with Hollywood bigwigs, golfing buddies, and even presidents, his zingers come to seem less like sharp satire and more like complacent, superior meanness.

Hope's television specials still pulled decent ratings, and his personal appearances were well attended, but more for nostalgia than fun. He was no longer the bright, sassy Bob Hope of yore, he was Bob "Texaco" Hope, and hardly anyone was laughing anymore.

Hope's critical reputation suffered terribly as a result, and has not yet recovered. Nonetheless, a fair assessment would have to recognize Hope as one of the greatest comic artists of the past century. He was a pioneering innovator in three different media, one of the most successful film and radio comics of all time, and a patriot who served his country admirably. Woody Allen (of all people) has praised Hope as the man who inspired him to take up comedy and strongly influenced his comic style. As the elderly Bob Hope fades from the scene, the younger one remains, on film and video, and it seems plausible to expect his reputation to rise again. If so, perhaps Hope will enjoy a well-deserved last laugh. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Two Roads to Nowhere

JOHN SIMON

SOME films are just good enough for you to have wished them a bit better. They are a little too sentimental, soft, and mildly dishonest to be much more than a slightly melancholy missed opportunity. Such a one is Cameron Crowe's ***Almost Famous***, a quasi-autobiographical memory film about the writer-director at age 15, when he managed to garner a journalistic assignment to cover a mid-level rock band's breakthrough national tour.

Two things need be stated forthwith. First, the only truly good thing I can say for rock 'n' roll is that it isn't rap. Crowe, however, seemingly still a happy adolescent at 43, clearly grooves on rock now as then. Second, 45 minutes have been cut to bring the film down to two hours, although Crowe (most famously the man behind *Jerry Maguire*) promises the uncut version on DVD next year. If, as I hear, the cuts were mostly concert sequences, so much the better; but if the cuts affected the now rather choppy and elliptic last part of the story, restoration may prove redemption, making judgment of the present version precarious.

But judge I will, anyway. *Almost Famous* is a watchable movie, no more, no less. Well, one thing about it is hard to watch: the leading actress, Kate Hudson, who is currently being hyped into celebrity, even though her one

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(dubious) strong suit is being Goldie Hawn's daughter. For the rest, she is neither especially talented nor much to look at, which to be sure, hasn't stopped many another from making it. Here she plays Penny Lane, the leader of a gaggle of groupies known as the Band-Aids. But of the groupies, Anna Paquin, of whom we see very little, is more gifted, and Fairuza Balk, of whom I'd be happy to see less, is at least sexy in a low-down, dirty way.

Young William Miller (Crowe's alter ego, played by first-timer Patrick Fugit) inherits the rock records of his rebel sister (the good Zooey Deschanel), who runs away from their college-professor single mother, the moralistic Elaine. By age 15, William, despite Elaine's sneering at rock and steering him toward literature, is an avid rock fan, and extorts permission from her to leave school and their San Diego home to follow the band Stillwater on assignment from the magazine *Rolling Stone*.

He gets especially close to the lead guitarist, Russell (Billy Crudup), who is locked in a progressively less friendly rivalry with the lead singer, Jeff (Jason Lee). Russell, with his Christ-like look and laid-back manner, is more charismatic than the nervous and explosive Jeff. Problems and more problems ensue when Penny, Russell's devoted groupie, on whom William has a crush, is literally gambled away by Russell, who, anyway, has a jealous woman back home. Then there are Penny's three fellow Band-Aids, who eventually get around to deflowering William in a scene so discreet and foreshortened as to be more like a quadrille than a seduction. There are scenes involving drugs, more comical than serious, and there is a near-suicide aborted in the nick of time.

But all this is slick, toothless, wrapped in the cotton wool of nostalgia, except for some funny phone conversations between William and Elaine and one uproarious sequence on a dangerously storm-tossed plane. Oral sex gets a fleeting mention, but, as the *New York Times*'s reviewer put it, this is "a movie about sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll that you would be happy to take your mother to see." Granted, there are mothers and there are mothers; still, this intended compliment strikes me as a cop-out for both reviewer and filmmaker. William's big dilemma is whether to tell the truth about the tour and alienate the band, or write a puff piece, and have *Rolling Stone* reject it. The youth opts for the former, but is forgiven by the band, whose reputation soars because of the article; Crowe makes the opposite choice with his movie and, whatever success it may reap, loses me.

Billy Crudup and Jason Lee do nicely by their underdeveloped characters; Frances McDormand makes Elaine a genuine eccentric; and Philip Seymour Hoffman, as the real-life disenchanted rock maven Lester Bangs, who becomes William's minatory but unheeded mentor about the untrustworthiness of rockers, is splendidly sour. As William, Patrick Fugit (a relative of Tempus?) makes a highly promising screen debut. John Toll has photographed with his customary controlled lushness, and mid-'70s rock is, I'm told, well represented on the soundtrack. But, oh, that Kate Hudson; where was Chloë Sevigny when we needed her?

■ Neil LaBute, whose reputation was made writing and directing sordid dramas where nastiness is not just revealed but actually reveled in, has merely directed ***Nurse Betty*** from a screenplay by others: the short-story writer John C. Richards and the movie-music editor, James Flamberg, the marriage of short-breathed fiction and soundtrack manipulation.

Betty Sizemore (Renée Zellweger), a young Kansas wife with some background in nursing, works as a counter girl in a diner. Unhappily married to the brutish used-car dealer (and secret dope peddler) Del (Aaron Eckhart), she finds bliss in watching her favorite soap opera, *A Reason to Love*, starring the cute George McCord as Dr. David Ravell (Greg Kinnear). Betty is in love, though it is unclear whether with George or David.

One night, immersed in her beloved TV show, she is unaware that two black men, whom she previously served at her counter, are making some kind of deal with Del in the next room. Though posing variously as cops or insurance-company investigators, Charlie (Morgan Freeman), the laid-back elder, and Wesley (Chris Rock), the loose-cannon younger, are in fact enforcers for a drug cartel. When Del is not forthcoming about where his doubly ill-gotten drug stash is hidden, the overeager Wesley scalps him, and the more tenderhearted Charlie shoots him to put him out of his misery.

Betty accidentally glimpses the murder, which induces dissociative trauma (in the old movies, it would have been amnesia), imagines that she was once engaged to Dr. Ravell, and sets out in Del's LeSabre (which, unbeknown to her, contains his stash) to find him in Los Angeles. Along the way, she makes a phone call to a girl chum back in Kansas, which sets the killers, now aware that she was a witness and armed with a snapshot of her, in hot pursuit. It transpires that a half-baked Kansas reporter and the bumbling Kansas sheriff are, in turn, pursuing the pursuers. There is effective crosscutting as Betty miraculously gets a nursing job in L.A., moves in with a comic but canny Chicano chick, while the hitmen painstakingly trail her.

George and the soap-opera staff mistake Betty for a would-be actress going to fantastic lengths to snag a role on the show; when she finally is given a small stint before the cameras, she slowly and shatteringly awakens to reality with bittersweet results. The scene where the truth dawns on her, though stretched almost beyond endurance, is acted by Miss Zellweger with such stunned intensity, such centripetal turmoil, as to constitute one of the great scenes in contemporary cinema.

Even though any soap-opera actor can tell you from his fan mail that the country is full of people who cannot distinguish between television and reality, such persons are seldom heroines of movies, made out to be smart under their dumbness. Equally problematic is that no one catches on to Betty's delusion until very late in the game. And do hardened criminals like Charlie fall in love with their designated victims on the strength of a few snapshots? This short list by no means exhausts *Nurse Betty*'s absurdities, yet in the current dearth of decent American films, even this questionable item, sensitively shot by Jean Yves Escoffier, goes down almost as smoothly as a dish prepared by the cinematographer's illustrious culinary namesake. **NR**

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Castro's U.N. Ride

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 8

WELL, did you hear what Castro, that old joker, did when he went on stage to speak to the General Assembly? There is a light on the podium that begins to blink five minutes after the head of state begins talking. That is a signal: It says: Sir, end your speech and get your arse off the stage, there is another head of state waiting to speak. What Castro did was theatrically to place a handkerchief over the light, an acknowledgment of his renowned verbosity. (What comes after a Saturday-night speech by Castro? Sunday.)

But the day had only begun for President Castro. He managed in his five-minute talk to deplore the influence of the United States throughout the world and to rail against the oppressions of the wealthy countries at the expense of the poorer countries. Mr. Castro is an authority on oppression, presiding as he does over a country which gasps for breath under the load of Mr. Castro's socialist strictures. He is here in New York addressing 150 world leaders and blaming the wealthy nations for, in effect, becoming wealthy—by encouraging freedom of economic and other human activity. Mr. Castro added that Cuba is "more free" than other states because, inasmuch as Cuba doesn't belong to any of the international economic organizations (World Bank, etc.), Cuba need not fear retaliation from the United States when it goes its own way; and that's true. By nice coincidence, the same day Castro spoke, the Kennedy Library released the recording of conversations in the White House during the missile crisis, a record of President Kennedy's discussions of the pledge he would make to Khrushchev not to invade Cuba, in exchange for the removal of the Soviet missiles. That was 38 years ago, and Castro is now absolutely senior in rank among the world's tyrants, a living example of the failure of U.S. policy, economic and homicidal.

But the best was yet to be, and all of the U.N. was tittering about it. It was a diplomatic lunch. In the crush, President Castro extended his hand and President Clinton took it—the first body contact between Castro and any of the nine American presidents who have served since he came down from the Cuban mountains. The U.S. side of the political theater was nicely sustained: Press secretary Joe Lockhart, asked if it was true that Clinton and Castro had shaken hands, replied, No. Somebody somewhere got through to the White House to say: Look, this isn't going to work—maybe 20 world leaders saw the handshake. So the White House said, well, yes, there was just that, a little exchange. Then Secretary of State Albright hove in to promise that the two-minute exchange (a very long handshake, come to think of it) had contained "nothing of substance." We do not know whether a blinking light signalled an appropriate end to this conversation, but we do know that nothing much is going on that would affect the current freeze on economic activity by Americans in Cuba, which is a bad idea, now that the Cold War is over.

But an end to the U.S. boycott would not alone relieve Cuba of its misery. And would have no bearing on the larger agenda Mr. Castro came to New York to consider. "Many in the present generation are losing confidence in the ability of the United Nations to make a difference between war and peace," Secretary-General Kofi Annan had said that morning, opening the session. Cuba does not have such problems as stopped the concerned world dead in Bosnia, East Timor, and Rwanda in recent years. It was Mr. Clinton's final appearance at the U.N. as president, and he did not let pass the opportunity to loose one of those clichés on which he thrives, and the world suffers through. "Until we confront the iron link between deprivation, disease, and war," he said, "we will never be able to create the peace that the founders of the United Nations dreamed of."

That is U.N.-speak, at best silly, at worst, contemptible. There is no such iron link. There are desperately poor nations that don't go in for genocide, and very rich nations that do. But Castro surely nodded his head in agreement, since impersonal causes of human misery are the mint of ideological dream worlds.

"The good news is that I sent your case file to Nashville, and they want to make a country-western song out of it."

In Six Months I'll Be a Good Boy

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 12

IF you see anybody around who predicts that life for the porn-types is going to be really tough six months after Al Gore is inaugurated president, *move in*. Give him 10–1 odds. Seven months after the inauguration, find a 14-year-old and take him/her to an R-rated movie and see if somebody jumps out at you. Saying what? Saying, "Stop! Didn't you hear Candidate Gore's speech? He said six months after he was sworn in, Hollywood would have to yield or—"

Or what?

The *Washington Post* came up with a scoop from *Daily Variety*. There is a tape, said the paper, of a meeting in 1987 between Sen. Gore and rock-music executives. It features an apology by Sen. Gore for his role in Senate hearings on dirty lyrics. Then the *Los Angeles Times* reports that last year Vice President Gore told Hollywood big enchiladas that the Federal Trade Commission's investigation wasn't his idea, it was Clinton's.

That refers to the report filed on Monday, whose imminent findings prompted Candidate Gore to swear that he and Joe, six months after they got into office, would end this effort to corrupt the young. The FTC alleged that Hollywood, whether pushing dirty movies or dirty music or dirty video games, was targeting very young audiences with some of its ads. So what is to be done about it? Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission Robert Pitofsky said that surely one way to go is to enforce existing laws and conventions. If the movie is R-rated, and the

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youngster comes up to the ticket counter unaccompanied by an adult, you're supposed to say No, you can't come in. And there are laws of sorts that touch down on rap music and video games. The computers bringing in the Internet are supposed to have Close-Sesame chips that Dad can activate to keep Sonny from spending his time with naked ladies, an option which means Dad has to get his own computer.

These are proper subjects of examination by scholars, and Mr. Pitofsky obviously has personally concluded that a correlation is there, and points to the effect of advertising by producers of violence and sex who want the kid's nickel, and perhaps his lifelong addiction to the genre.

It is curious that concerning two matters, our cognoscenti are very much alert to the influence of advertising on young and curious children. Causal relations are here taken for granted. If you advertise cigarettes, more young people will smoke. If you advertise the availability of guns, more young people will buy guns. You then sanction laws, most of them very popular with the liberal elite, that forbid selling a cigarette to a minor, as also a gun. But *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is probably protected, critics of Mr. Gore from the left would be quick to say. You are brushing up against the First Amendment, never mind that Mr. Gore specified that any laws or administrative actions that he would favor at the end of the six-month probationary period would abide strictly by the guarantees of the First Amendment.

So what do you do then? "What happens after six months if they don't comply voluntarily?" a *New York Times* reporter wanted to know.

Gore: "There are differing opinions within the FTC legal staff as to whether or not the current authority allows them to proceed against false and deceptive advertising in this situation. So that would have to be tested."

What does it all mean?

Ask Jack Valenti, the street-wise Hollywood spokesman whose prowess dates back to when he had to defend Lyndon Johnson.

Reported the *Times*: "Mr. Valenti dismissed the Democrats' proposal as carefully calibrated political posturing. 'Frankly,' he said, 'if I were running for office I'd be trashing the movie industry myself.'"

Does that tell us that if you run for office, under current conventions, you are trashing democracy?

Where Do We Find Power?

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 15

THE energy drought infuriates in part because there aren't many remedies fished up by intelligent analysis. But this doesn't mean there isn't anything to be done.

It is a reminder of the industrial world's utter dependence on energy what happens when it becomes scarce. The consequences aren't only a shortage of energy, but derivative afflictions. Here is the lead from today's *Slate*'s "International Papers," by June Thomas.

"*Y2K in the U.K.* The predictions of the Y2K soothsayers have come true in Britain as the nation's infrastructure collapses: Supermarkets are rationing bread and milk! Hospitals are running short of drugs! Banks have only a few days' supply of cash on hand! Mail deliveries are threatened! Factory production lines could be halted, schools closed, and buses and trains grounded! Even the billion-dollar Millennium Dome seems to be snared by the curse, as the government contemplates its demolition only a year after it opened. The cause of the crisis, however, is not the millennium bug. The country is short on petrol."

Now gasoline in Great Britain sells for approximately $5.50 per gallon and 75 percent ($4) goes to the government in tax. A reduction in tax is the quickest way to alleviate public pressure, and France has done exactly that, reducing its tax by 15 percent.

This exercise is excruciatingly painful. Look at it this way: If Great Britain lowers the tax on gasoline by, say, 25 percent, that lowers state revenue over the next quarter by the relevant figure. Say, to use round figures, £200 million.

Now that money, which has been going for general expenses, most notably (to quote British analysts) for the kind of environmental protection and maintenance that are required by the existence of automobile traffic, is now going somewhere else. Where, exactly? Well, it is a form of foreign aid to Saudi Arabia, Russia, Kuwait, Nigeria, and Venezuela. To say that isn't an exercise in economic reductionism. That is exactly where the money goes, and it leaves those countries, which heretofore had the use of the money, needing to find alternative means of raising it.

The beauty of the excise tax on economic merchandise for which the demand is, if not inflexible, militant, is that we are dealing with a form of regressive taxation. Yes, when the gas price rises there is a decline in the use of the car; but it is a reluctant decline. An increase in the cost of gas by 100 percent does not cause a 100 percent decline in the use of automobiles. Cigarettes are analogous: Increase the price of cigarettes by 4 percent and you get a 1 percent reduction in the use of them. Gas, especially in America where the tax is, compared to Europe's, measly at 22 percent, is a Way of Life. And a deprivation of gas is on the order of a deprivation of something guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. The American people are fiercely resistant in the matter.

There is a palliative at hand. We have 600 million barrels of oil in our strategic reserve, topped up for use in case of national emergency. We could ease that oil out, at least until the winter fuel crisis abates. But the strategic problem isn't solved. We are not about to invade Saudi Arabia, and we have before faced unsuccessfully the problem of oil oligopoly. The new wisecrack at our expense, from an anonymous OPEC representative, is that the OPEC people will worry about oligopoly after the United States has solved the Microsoft problem.

We are left looking in the face, one more time, of alternative energy sources, specifically nuclear power. The quarrels go on, though not much public attention is given to them. China says its Qinshan project is on line and in two or three years they'll be making 6.6 million kilowatts of power from the four new plants. Russia is contemplating a huge program over 30 years, and intends to offer its nuclear-plant-construction skills to India and Iran. Taiwan is debating whether to go further in nuclear power. Japan plans to proceed with nuclear energy.

Only 6 percent of the world's energy now comes from nuclear-power plants. The critics of nuclear power have rested their case substantially on the toxicity of accidents of the kind associated with Chernobyl. The pro-nuclear people now stress that the global-warming agents are absent from nuclear power. It is fossil fuels that increase radiation. But that still leaves the problem of accidental leaks and of the disposal of nuclear waste.

Surely this is one for the presidential candidates to explore? Let's hear Mr. Bush talk about the strategic limitations of oil, and Mr. Gore talk about the strategic importance of nuclear energy.

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

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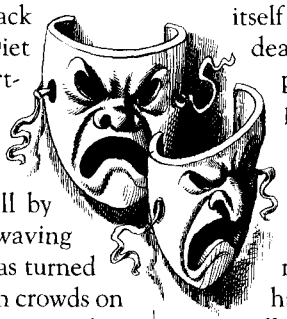
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

I AM writing this in bed, where I am recovering by proxy from Al Gore's 28-hour nonstop Labor Day campaign marathon, "Sleepless in Wherever." Somebody has to rest and since he isn't about to, I'm doing it for him in my capacity as a veteran of the next worst thing to political campaigns: book tours.

The Constitution sets the minimum age for presidents at 35, but the candidates we end up with are nearly always in their 50s—the heart-attack age. Never mind all the Diet Cokes, it's still the heart-attack age, which makes Gore a candidate in more ways than one.



Pols used to enter a hall by walking up the aisle and waving decorously. Now the aisle has turned into a ragged serpentine with crowds on opposite rope lines. Gore runs in smiling maniacally and zigzags from one rope line to the other like an infantryman dodging bullets. At one stop he and Lieberman staged what appeared to be a modern-dance recital, entering from opposite ends of the hall and loping toward one another in a wide arc, meeting in the middle like an ecstatic Daphnis and Chloë. All that was missing were the diaphanous chitons.

In his round-the-clock trial by ordeal, Gore marched in a Pittsburgh parade, visited a truck factory in Michigan, watched football in a Philadelphia pub, ate breakfast with firefighters, ate lunch with construction workers (buying 100 cheesesteak sandwiches), and drove Louisville's Motor Speedway in his limo. Afterward, he made a point of rubbing it in to groggy reporters during a night flight on Air Force Two. "I can't believe that you guys are sleeping back here," he gloated, all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. "I'm loving it."

Some sensible advance man scheduled his final campaign stop at a 911 emergency center where he signed autographs, but he probably wished he could wind it up by going a few rounds with Tipper. They couldn't do it publicly, of course, but he could have picked her up and thrown her on a gurney in the back of an ambulance and climbed in after her. It would have looked like Emma and Léon making out in the swaying coach in *Madame Bovary*. This way, if he had had a heart attack, the rescue squad wouldn't have needed to go and get him because he was already there.

Never mind campaign-finance reform, we need to reform campaigning itself before some candidate drops dead or causes a calamity. The possibilities are endless. Suppose a punch-drunk Gore tries to slap high fives, misses, and hits a little old lady in the head and kills her? Or, working a diner at 4 A.M., he reaches across a table to shake hands and knocks a woman's coffee in her lap. He grabs a napkin and tries to pat her dry, but just then her husband returns from the men's room, misconstrues the scene, and socks Gore in the nose. The Secret Service agents panic and shoot the husband, rumors spread that citizens are being executed, riots erupt nationwide, and Clinton declares martial law, cancels the election, and stays in office for the duration of Civil War II.

Gore's insane Labor Day marathon was supposed to show how hard he will work for the American people, but to me it hinted darkly of a taste for self-punishment that could make a Gore presidency perilous in a way that a Clinton presidency is not and never could be.

Despite his libido, Clinton is cerebral rather than physical; lazy, self-protective, and soft. He never went out for sports in school, and now that his jogging regimen seems to be on hold, only golf interrupts the flow of his inactivity. JFK's obsession with "vigor" is one aspect of his hero that he hasn't copied, as when he told Monica that intercourse would be too risky. True, he had an ulterior motive, but the result was the same: He avoided exertion and took his pleasure the easy way.

Nor does he follow JFK's lead in going coatless to prove that he can "take it." Clinton has a heavy, unusually long black overcoat that makes him look like an undertaker, but he wears it anyway for the sensible purpose of keeping warm. Like all true voluptuaries, he is a finicky indoorsman who loves his precious, pasty-white self too much to place any demands on it. He hurls himself into campaigning because it gives him pleasure, but Gore does it because it gives him pain. Given the choice of a Sybarite or a Spartan in the White House, I'll take the Sybarite every time.

Next to Gore on the scale of neurotic campaigning is Lieberman, not because he's a Spartan but because he is so eager to please that he would sing "I'm a Little Teapot" in 50 kindergartens a day if that's what it took. As for W., he's a casual campaigner, but for the wrong reasons: He's lazy and diffident without having the excuse of being a reader.

Ironically, the only confident, psychologically healthy candidate is the man described by the *Washington Post*'s David Von Drehle as "grouchy," "snippy," "taciturn," "shy," and "visibly irritated." The man who enters a room with downcast eyes, trails off in a mumble, and "smiles as if his lips were sewn shut."

Dick Cheney on a campaign is like me on a book tour. When we say what a pleasure it is to be wherever the hell we are, it comes out sounding like Dorothy Parker's monologue: "Would I like to waltz with you? Would I like to be caught in a storm at sea?" W. would advise that you gotta let 'em look in your heart, but that, in my case at least, would only compound the problem.

The kind of personality Americans now demand from public figures is alluded to in the political reporter's familiar phrase, "wade into the crowd." Anyone who has ever been in the spotlight, whether Cheney's big one or my modest one, learns firsthand the shattering effect that aloofness has on Americans. You must radiate naked emotional neediness or they will hate you; the slightest pulling back will set them off and trigger an onrush of panicky hostility that must be experienced to be believed. So ask not why we can't restore maturity and sanity to campaigns. *This is why.* **NR**

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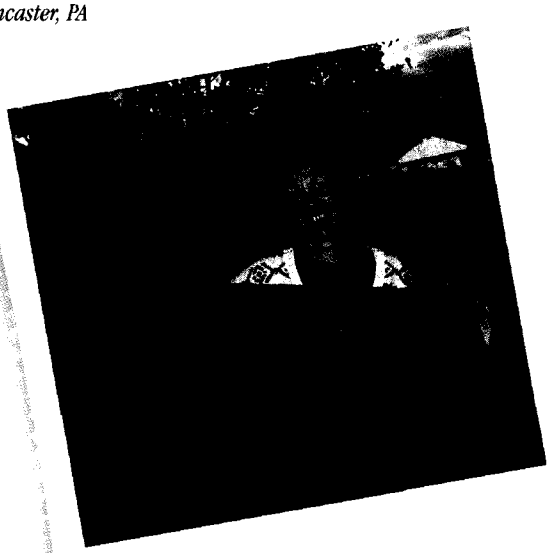

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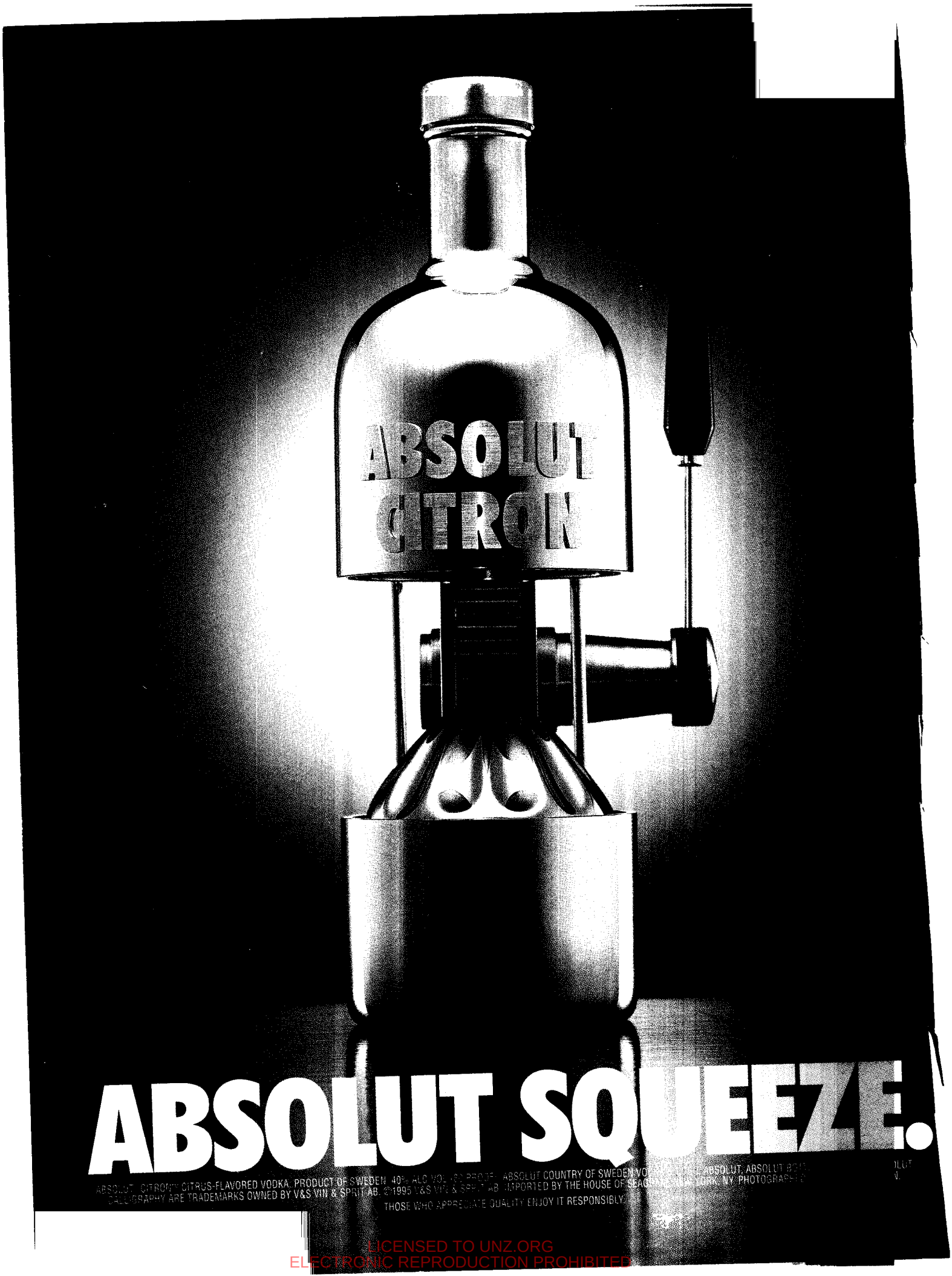

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